



3 1761 04578312 3



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2008 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation





Robb-4  
58

## HOW CAN WAR EVER BE RIGHT?

I HAVE all my life been an advocate of Peace. I hate war, not merely for its own cruelty and folly, but because it is the enemy of all the causes that I care for most, of social progress and good government and all friendliness and gentleness of life, as well as of art and learning and literature. I have spoken and presided at more meetings than I can remember for peace and arbitration and the promotion of international friendship. I opposed the policy of war in South Africa with all my energies, and have been either outspokenly hostile or inwardly unsympathetic towards almost every war that Great Britain has waged in my lifetime. If I may speak more personally, there is none of my own work into which I have put more intense feeling than into my translation of Euripides' *Trojan Women*, the first great denunciation of war in European literature. I do not regret any word that I have spoken or written in the cause of Peace, nor have I changed, as far as I know, any opinion that I have previously held on this subject. Yet I believe firmly that we were right to declare war against Germany on August 4, 1914, and that to have remained neutral in that crisis would have been a failure in public duty.

A heavy responsibility—there is no doubt of it—lies upon Great Britain. Our allies, France and Russia, Belgium and Serbia, had no choice; the war was, in various degrees, forced on all of them. We only, after

ELECTRONIC VERSION

AVAILABLE

97000618 447-1890



deliberately surveying the situation, when Germany would have preferred for the moment not to fight us, of our free will declared war. And we were right.

How can such a thing be ? It is easy enough to see that our cause is right, and the German cause, by all ordinary human standards, desperately wrong. It is hardly possible to study the official papers issued by the British, the German, and the Russian governments, without seeing that Germany—or some party in Germany—had plotted this war beforehand ; that she chose a moment when she thought her neighbours were at a disadvantage ; that she prevented Austria from making a settlement even at the last moment ; that in order to get more quickly at France she violated her treaty with Belgium. Evidence too strong to resist seems to show that she has carried out the violation with a purposeful cruelty that has no parallel in the wars of modern and civilized nations. Yet some people may still feel gravely doubtful. Germany's ill-doing is no reason for us to do likewise. We did our best to keep the general peace ; there we were right. We failed ; the German government made war in spite of us. There we were unfortunate. It was a war already on an enormous scale, a vast network of calamity ranging over five nations ; and we decided to make it larger still. There we were wrong. Could we not have stood aside, as the United States stand, ready to help refugees and sufferers, anxious to heal wounds and not make them, watchful for the first chance of putting an end to this time of horror ?

‘ Try for a moment ’, an objector to our policy might say, ‘ to realize the extent of suffering involved in one small corner of a battlefield. You have seen a man here

and there badly hurt in an accident ; you have seen perhaps a horse with its back broken, and you can remember how dreadful it seemed to you. In that one corner how many men, how many horses, will be lying, hurt far worse and just waiting to die ? Indescribable wounds, extreme torment ; and all, far further than any eye can see, multiplied and multiplied ! And, for all your righteous indignation against Germany, what have these done ? The horses are not to blame for anybody's foreign policy. They have only come where their masters took them. And the masters themselves . . . admitting that certain highly-placed Germans, whose names we are not sure of, are as wicked as ever you like, these soldiers, peasants and working-men and shop-keepers and schoolmasters have really done nothing in particular ; at least, perhaps they have now, but they had not up to the time when you, seeing they were involved in war and misery already, decided to make war on them also and increase their sufferings. You say that justice must be done on conspirators and public malefactors. But as far as the rights and wrongs of the war go, you are simply condemning innocent men, by thousands and thousands, to death, or even to mutilation and torture ; is that the best way to satisfy your sense of justice ? These innocent people, you will say, are fighting to protect the guilty parties whom you are determined to reach. Well, perhaps, at the end of the war, after millions of innocent people have suffered, you may at last, if all goes well with your arms, get at the " guilty parties ". You will hold an inquiry, with imperfect evidence and biased judges ; you will decide—in all likelihood wrongly—that a dozen very stupid and obstinate Prussians with long titles are the guilty parties, and even then you will not know what to do with them.

You will probably try, and almost certainly fail, to make them somehow feel ashamed or humiliated. It is likely enough that you will merely make them into national heroes.

‘And after all, this is assuming quite the best sort of war : a war in which one party is wrong and the other right, and the right wins. Suppose both are wrong ; or suppose the wrong party wins ? It is as likely as not ; for, if the right party is helped by his good conscience, the wrong has probably taken pains to have the odds on his side before he began quarrelling. In that case all the wild expenditure of blood and treasure, all the immeasurable suffering of innocent individuals and dumb animals, all the tears of women and children in the background, have taken place not to vindicate the right but to establish the wrong. To do a little evil that great or certain good may come is all very well ; but to do almost infinite evil for a doubtful chance of attaining something which half the people concerned may think good and the other half think bad, and which in no imaginable case can ever be attained in fullness or purity . . . that is neither good morals nor good sense. Anybody not in a passion must see that it is insanity.’

I sympathize with every step of this argument ; yet I think it is wrong. It is judging of the war as a profit-and-loss account, and reckoning, moreover, only the immediate material consequences. It leaves out of sight the cardinal fact that in some causes it is better to fight and be broken than to yield peacefully ; that sometimes the mere act of resisting to the death is in itself a victory.

Let us try to understand this. The Greeks who fought and died at Thermopylae had no manner of doubt that



they were right so to fight and die, and all posterity has agreed with them. They probably knew they would be defeated. They probably expected that, after their defeat, the Persians would proceed easily to conquer the rest of Greece, and would treat it much more harshly because it had resisted. But such considerations did not affect them. They would not consent to their country's dishonour.

Take again a very clear modern case : the fine story of the French tourist who was captured, together with a priest and some other white people, by Moorish robbers. The Moors gave their prisoners the choice either to trample on the Cross or to be killed. The Frenchman happened to be a Free-thinker and an anti-clerical. He disliked Christianity. But he was not going to trample on the Cross at the orders of a robber. He stuck to his companions and died.

This sense of honour, and the respect for this sense of honour, are very deep instincts in the average man. In the United States there is a rather specially strong feeling against mixture of blood, not only with the blood of coloured people but with that of the large masses of mankind who are lumped together as 'dagoes' or 'hunkies'. Yet I have noticed that persons with a dash of Red Indian blood are not ashamed but rather proud of it. And if you look for the reason, I suspect it lies in the special reputation which the Indian has acquired, that he would never consent to be a slave. He preferred to fight till he was dead.

A deal of nonsense, no doubt, is talked about 'honour' and 'dishonour'. They are feelings based on sentiment, not on reason ; the standards by which they are judged are often conventional or shallow, and sometimes utterly false. Yet honour and dishonour are real things I will

not try to define them ; but will only notice that, like Religion, their characteristic is that they admit of no bargaining. Indeed we can almost think of honour as being simply that which a free man values more than life, and dishonour as that which he avoids more than suffering or death. And the important point for us is that there are such things.

There are some people, followers of Tolstoy, who accept this position as far as dying is concerned, but will have nothing to do with killing. Passive resistance, they say, is right ; martyrdom is right ; but to resist violence by violence is sin.

I was once walking with a friend and disciple of Tolstoy's in a country lane, and a little girl running in front of us. I put to him the well-known question : ' Suppose you saw a man, wicked or drunk or mad, run out and attack that child. You are a big man and carry a big stick : would you not stop him and, if necessary, knock him down ? ' ' No,' he said, ' why should I commit a sin ? I would try to persuade him, I would stand in his way, I would let him kill me, but I would not strike him.' Some few people will always be found, less than one in a thousand, to take this view. They will say : ' Let the little girl be killed or carried off ; let the wicked man commit another wickedness ; I, at any rate, will not add to the mass of useless violence that I see all round me.'

With such persons one cannot reason, though one can often respect them. Nearly every normal man will feel that the real sin, the real dishonour, lies in allowing an abominable act to be committed under your eyes while you have the strength to prevent it. And the stronger you are, the greater your chance of

success, by so much the more are you bound to intervene. If the robbers are overpoweringly strong and there is no chance of beating or baffling them, then and only then should you think of martyrdom. Martyrdom is not the best possibility. It is almost the worst. It is a counsel of despair, the last resort when there is no hope of successful resistance. The best thing—suppose once the robbers are there and intent on crime—the best thing is to overawe them at once ; the next best, to defeat them after a hard struggle ; the third best, to resist vainly and be martyred ; the worst of all, the one evil that need never be endured, is to let them have their will without protest. (As for converting them from their evil ways, that is a process which may be hoped for afterwards.)

- We have noticed that in all these cases of honour there is, or at least there seems to be, no counting of cost, no balancing of good and evil. In ordinary conduct we are always balancing the probable results of this course or that ; but when honour or religion come on the scene all such balancing ceases. If you argued to the Christian martyr : ‘ Suppose you do burn the pinch of incense, what will be the harm ? All your friends know you are really a Christian : they will not be misled. The idol will not be any the better for the incense, nor will your own true God be any the worse. Why should you bring misery on yourself and all your family ? ’ Or suppose you pleaded, with the French atheist : ‘ Why in the world should you not trample on the Cross ? It is the sign of the clericalism to which you object. Even if trampling somewhat exaggerates your sentiments, the harm is small. Who will be a penny the worse for your trampling ? While you will live instead of dying, and all your family be

happy instead of wretched ?' Suppose you said to the Red Indian : ' My friend, you are outnumbered by ten to one. If you will submit unconditionally to these pale-faces, and be always civil and obliging, they will probably treat you quite well. If they do not, well, you can reconsider the situation later on. No need to get yourself killed at once.'

The people concerned would not condescend to meet your arguments. Perhaps they can be met, perhaps not. But it is in the very essence of religion or honour that it must outweigh all material considerations. The point of honour is the point at which a man says to some proposal, ' I will not do it. I will rather die.'

These things are far easier to see where one man is involved than where it is a whole nation. But they arise with nations too. In the case of a nation the material consequences are much larger, and the point of honour is apt to be less clear. But, in general, whenever one nation in dealing with another relies simply on force or fraud, and denies to its neighbour the common consideration due to human beings, a point of honour must arise.

Austria says suddenly to Serbia : ' You are a wicked little State. I have annexed and governed against their will some millions of your countrymen, yet you are still full of anti-Austrian feeling, which I do not intend to allow. You will dismiss from your service all officials, politicians, and soldiers who do not love Austria, and I will further send you from time to time lists of persons whom you are to dismiss or put to death. And if you do not agree to this within forty-eight hours, I, being vastly stronger than you, will



make you.' As a matter of fact, Serbia did her very best to comply with Austria's demands ; she accepted about two-thirds of them, and asked for arbitration on the remaining third. But it is clear that she could not accept them all without being dishonoured. That is, Serbia would have given up her freedom at the threat of force ; the Serbs would no longer be a free people, and every individual Serb would have been humiliated. He would have confessed himself to be the kind of man who will yield when an Austrian bullies him. And if it is urged that under good Austrian government Serbia would become richer and safer, and the Serbian peasants get better markets, such pleas cannot be listened to. They are a price offered for slavery ; and a free man will not accept slavery at a price.

Germany, again, says to Belgium (we leave out for the moment the fact of Germany's special treaty obligations), ' We have no quarrel with you, but we intend for certain reasons to march across your territory and perhaps fight a battle or two there. We know that you are pledged by treaty not to allow any such thing, but we cannot help that. Consent, and we will pay you some compensation afterwards ; refuse, and we shall make you wish you had never been born.' At that moment Belgium was a free self-governing State. If it had yielded to Germany's demand, it would have ceased to be either. It is possible that, if Germany had been completely victorious and France quite unable to retaliate, Belgium would have suffered no great material injury ; but it would have taken orders from a stranger who had no right to give them, simply because he was strong and Belgium dared not face him. Belgium refused. It has had some of its principal towns destroyed, some thousands of its soldiers killed,

many more thousands of its women, children, and non-combatants outraged and beggared ; but it is still free. It has still its honour.

Let us think this matter out more closely. Our Tolstoyan will say : ‘ We speak of Belgium’s honour and Serbia’s honour ; but who is Serbia and who is Belgium ? There is no such person as either. There are only great numbers of people who happen to be Serbians and Belgians, and who mostly have had nothing to do with the questions at issue. Some of them are honourable people, some dishonourable. The honour of each one of them depends very much on whether he pays his debts and tells the truth, but not in the least on whether a number of foreigners walk through his country or interfere with his government. King Albert and his ministers might feel humiliated if the German Government compelled them to give way against their will ; but would the ordinary population ? Would the ordinary peasant or shopkeeper or artisan in the districts of Visé and Liège and Louvain have felt particularly disgraced or ashamed ? He would probably have made a little money and been greatly amused by the sight of the troops passing. Who will pretend that he would have suffered any injury that can for a moment be compared with what he has suffered now, in order that his Government may feel proud of itself ? ’

I will not raise the point that, as a matter of fact, to grant a right of way to Germany would have been equivalent to declaring war against France, so that Belgium would not, by giving up her independence, have been spared the danger of war. I will assume that nothing but honour was involved. In that form, this

question goes to the root of our whole conception of citizenship and the position of man in society. And I believe that our Tolstoyan friend is profoundly wrong.

Is it true, in a healthy and well-governed State, that the average citizen is indifferent to the honour of his country ? We know that it is not. True, the average citizen may often not understand what is going on, but as soon as he knows he cares. Suppose for a moment that the King, or the Prime Minister, or the President of the United States, were found to be in the pay of a foreign State, as for instance Charles II was in the pay of Louis XIV, can any one pretend that the ordinary citizens of Great Britain or America would take it quietly ? That any normal man would be found saying : ' Well, the King, or the President, or the Prime Minister, is behaving dishonourably, but that is a matter for him, not for me. I am an honest and honourable man, and my Government can do what it likes.' The notion is absurd. The ordinary citizen would feel instantly and without question that his country's honour involved his own. And woe to the society in which it were otherwise ! We know of such societies in history. They are the kind which is called ' corrupt ', and which generally has not long to live. Belgium has proved that she is not that kind of society.

But what about Great Britain herself ? At the present moment a very clear case has arisen, and we can test our own feelings. Great Britain had, by a solemn treaty more than once renewed, pledged herself to maintain the neutrality of Belgium. Belgium is a little State lying between two very strong States, France and Germany, and in danger of being overrun or maltreated by one

of them unless the Great Powers guarantee her safety. The treaty, signed by Prussia, Russia, Austria, France, and Great Britain, bound all these Powers not to attack Belgium, move troops into it, or annex any part of it ; and further, to resist by armed force any Power which should try to do any of these things. Belgium, on her part, was bound to maintain her own neutrality to the best of her power, and not to side with any State which was at war with another.

At the end of last July the exact case arose in which we had pledged ourselves to act. Germany suddenly and without excuse invaded Belgium, and Belgium appealed to us and France to defend her. Meantime she fought alone, desperately, against overwhelming odds. The issue was clear, and free from any complications. The German Chancellor, Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, in his speech of August 6, admitted that Germany had no grievance against Belgium, and no excuse except 'necessity'. She could not get to France quick enough by the direct road. Germany put her case to us, roughly, on these grounds. 'True, you did sign a treaty, but what is a treaty ? We ourselves signed the same treaty, and see what we are doing ! Anyhow, treaty or no treaty, we have Belgium absolutely in our power. If she had done what we wanted, we would have treated her kindly ; as it is we shall show her no mercy. If you will now do what we want and stay quiet, later on, at our convenience, we will consider a friendly deal with you. If you interfere, you must take the consequences. We trust you will not be so insane as to plunge your whole Empire into danger for the sake of "a scrap of paper".' Our answer was : 'Evacuate Belgium within twelve hours or we fight you.'

I think that answer was right. Consider the situation



carefully. No question arises of overhaste or lack of patience on our part. From the first moment of the crisis, we had laboured night and day in every Court of Europe for any possible means of conciliation and peace. We had carefully and sincerely explained to Germany beforehand what attitude she might expect from us. We did not send our ultimatum till Belgium was already invaded. It is just the plain question put to the British Government, and, I think, to every one who feels himself a British citizen : ' The exact case contemplated in your treaty has arisen : the people you swore to protect is being massacred ; will you keep your word at a gigantic cost, or will you break it at the bidding of Germany ? ' For my own part, weighing the whole question soberly and without undue passion, I feel that in this case I would rather die than submit ; and I believe that the Government, in deciding to keep its word at the cost of war, has rightly interpreted the feeling of the average British citizen.

So much for the question of honour, pure and simple ; honour without regard for consequences. But, of course, situations in real political life are never so simple as that ; they have many different aspects and ramifications. And in the present case, though the point of honour happens to be quite clear, it seems probable that even without it there were compelling reasons for war. I do not, of course, for a moment mean that war was going to be ' profitable ' to Great Britain ; such a calculation would be infamous. I mean that, terrible as the consequences of our taking part in the war were sure to be, the consequences of our not doing so were likely to be even more profoundly and widely evil.

Let us leave aside then, the definite treaty binding

us to Belgium. Apart from that, we were faced with a complicated question of statesmanship, of prudence, of patriotism towards our own country and towards humanity.

Germany has for years presented a problem to Europe. Since her defeat of France in 1870, she has been extraordinarily successful, and the success seems to have intoxicated her. This is a complicated subject, which calls for far deeper knowledge than I possess. I will merely try to state, as fairly as I can, the impression that has been forced on me by a certain amount of reading and observation. From the point of view of one who really believes that great nations ought to behave to one another as scrupulously and honourably as ordinary law-abiding men, no Power in Europe, or out of it, is quite blameless. They all have ambitions ; they all, to some extent, use spies ; they all, within limits, try to outwit each other ; in their diplomatic dealings they rely not only on the claims of good sense and justice, but ultimately, no doubt, on the threat of possible force. But, as a matter of degree, Germany does all these things more than other Powers. In her diplomacy, force comes at once to the front ; international justice is hardly mentioned. She spends colossal sums on her Secret Service, so that German spies are become a by-word and a joke. In the recognized sport of international treachery, she goes frequently beyond the rules of the game. Her Emperor, her Imperial Chancellor, and other people in the highest positions of responsibility, expound her ambitions and her schemes in language which would only be used by an irresponsible journalist in England or France. They discuss, for instance, whether the time has come for conquering France once more, and how best they can ' bleed her

white ' and reduce her to impotence. They explain that Bismarck and his generation have made Germany the strongest Power on the Continent. ' The will of Germany is now respected ' in Europe ; it rests with the present Emperor to make it similarly respected throughout the world. ' Germany's world-future lies on the sea.' They discuss whether they can build up a fleet strong enough to fight and beat the British fleet without Great Britain interfering. They discuss in public how many colonies, and which, they will leave to Great Britain when the great ' Day ' comes. They express regret, combined, as far as one can make out, with a little genuine surprise, that the ' brutal egoism of Great Britain ' should raise any objection to this plan, and they hope—openly and publicly—that her well-known weakness and cowardice will make her afraid to act. Since Great Britain has a vast number of Mohammedan subjects, who may possibly be stirred to disaffection, the German Emperor proclaims to ' the three hundred million Mohammedans who live scattered over the globe ' that whenever they need him, the German Emperor will be their friend. And this in 1898, in the middle of profound peace ! Professors in German Universities lecture on the best way of destroying the British Empire, and the officers' messes in the German Navy regularly drink the toast of ' The Day '. There is no need to explain what Day. The curious thing is that these plans are all expounded in public speeches and books—strange books, in which the average civilized sense of international justice or common honesty seems to have been left out of account, as well as the sense of common political prudence ; in which the schemes of an accomplished burglar are expounded with the candour of a child.

And all through this period, in which she plots against

her neighbours and tells them she is plotting, Germany lives in a state of alarm. Her neighbours are so unfriendly ! Their attitude may be correct, but it is not trustful and cordial. The Imperial Chancellor, von Bülow, explains in his book that there was only one time when he really breathed freely. It was in 1909, when Austria, his ally, annexed by violence and against her pledges the two Slav provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. All Europe was indignant, especially Russia, the natural protector of the Slavs, and England, the habitual champion of small nationalities. But Germany put down her foot. The Kaiser ‘appeared in shining armour beside his ally’, and no power dared to intervene. Germany was in the wrong. Every one knew she was in the wrong. It was just that fact that was so comforting. Her army was big enough, her navy was big enough ; and for the moment the timid creature felt secure.

Lastly, we must remember that it is Germany who started the race for armaments ; and that while Russia has pressed again and again for a general limitation of armies, and England made proposal after proposal for a general limitation of navies, Germany has steadily refused to entertain any such idea.

Now, for some time it was possible to minimize all these danger-signals, and, for my own part, I have always tried to minimize them. There are militarists and jingoes in every country ; our own have often been bad enough. The German sort seemed unusually blatant, but it did not follow that they carried their country with them. The Kaiser, always impulsive, said on the whole more friendly things than unfriendly things. At any rate, it seemed wiser and more statesmanlike to meet provocation with good temper, and to try by



persistent friendliness to encourage all the more Liberal and reasonable elements in German public life. This policy seemed possible until the July of the present year. Then certain facts were forced upon us. They are all detailed in the White Paper and the other diplomatic correspondence.

We suddenly found that Germany and Austria, or some conspiring parties in Germany and Austria, had arranged for a great stroke, like that of 1909 on a larger scale. It was so obviously aggressive in its nature that their ally, Italy, the third Power in the Triple Alliance, formally refused to act with them. The Alliance only applied to a defensive war. The time had been carefully chosen. England was supposed to be on the verge of a civil war in Ireland and a new mutiny in India. France had just been through a military scandal, in which it appeared that the army was short of boots and ammunition. Russia, besides a general strike and internal troubles, was re-arming her troops with a new weapon, and the process was only half through. Even the day was chosen. It was in a week when nearly all the Ambassadors were away from their posts, taking their summer holiday—the English Ambassador at Berlin, the Russian Ambassadors at Berlin and Vienna, the Austrian Foreign Minister, the French Prime Minister, the Serbian Prime Minister, the Kaiser himself, and others who might have used a restraining influence on the schemes of the war-party. Suddenly, without a word to any outside Power, Austria issued an ultimatum to Serbia, to be answered in forty-eight hours. Seventeen of these hours had elapsed before the other Powers were informed, and war was declared on Serbia before all the Ambassadors could get back to their posts. The leading statesmen of Europe sat up all night trying for

conciliation, for arbitration, even for bare delay. At the last moment, when the Austrian Foreign Minister had returned, and had consented to a basis for conversations with Russia, there seemed to be a good chance that peace might be preserved ; but at that moment Germany launched her ultimatum at Russia and France, and Austria was already invading Serbia. In twenty-four hours, six European Powers were at war.

Now, the secret history of this strange intrigue is not yet known. It will not be known for fifty years or so. It is impossible to believe that the German nation would have backed up the plot, if they had understood it. It is difficult to think that the Kaiser would ; and the Austrian Foreign Minister, when once he returned, tried to undo the work of his subordinates. But somehow the war parties in Germany and Austria got the upper hand for one fatal week, and have managed to drag their countries after them.

We saw, as Italy had seen, that Germany had pre-arranged the war. We saw her breaking her treaties and over-running little Belgium, as her ally was trampling on little Serbia. We remembered her threats against ourselves. And at this very time, as if to deepen our suspicions, she made us what has been justly termed an 'infamous proposal', that if we would condone her treaty-breaking now, she would have an 'understanding' with us afterwards.

Suppose we had not been bound by our treaty to Belgium, or even our natural and informal friendship with France : what could we have done ? I wish to take no low ground ; I wish to face the question from the point of view of a statesman who owes a duty to his own country and a duty to Europe.

The one thing which we could not have done, in my opinion, was to repudiate our responsibility. We are a very strong Power, one of the strongest in the world, and here, under our eyes and within range of our guns, a thing was being done which menaced every living creature in Europe. The one thing that no statesman could possibly do was to say : ‘ This is no concern of ours. We will go our ways as usual.’ It was perfectly possible to stand aside and proclaim our neutrality. But—apart from questions of honour—to proclaim neutrality was quite as grave a step as to proclaim war. Let no man imagine that he can escape blood-guiltiness by standing still while murder is committed before his eyes.

I will not argue here what the right decision would have been. It depends, unlike the point of honour, on a careful balancing of evidence and consequences, and scarcely any one in the country except the Government has sufficient knowledge to make the balance. For my own part, I should have started with a strong predilection for peace, even a fragmentary peace, but should ultimately have been guided chiefly by the public men whom I most trust. But, as things fell out, our Government was not forced to make a decision on this difficult ground at all, because Germany took a further step which made the whole situation clear. Her treatment of Belgium not only roused our passionate indignation, but compelled us either to declare war or to break our pledged word. I incline, however, to think that our whole welfare is so vitally dependent on the observance of public law and the rights of nations, and would have been so terribly endangered by the presence of Germany in a conqueror’s mood at Ostend and Zeebrugge, not to speak of Dunkirk and Calais, that in this case mere self-

preservation called us to fight. I do not venture to lay any stress on the hopes which we may entertain for the building up of a better Europe after the war, a Europe which shall have settled its old feuds and devised some great machinery for dealing with new difficulties as they arise, on a basis of justice and concord, not of intrigue and force. By all means let us hope, let us work, for that rebuilding ; but it will be a task essentially difficult when it comes ; and the very beginning of it lies far away, separated from the present time and the immediate task by many terrific hazards. We have no right to soothe our consciences concerning the war with professions of the fine and generous things that we are going to do afterwards. Doubtless Germany was going to make us all good and happy when she was once sure of our obedience. For the moment we can only think of our duty, and need of self-preservation. And I believe that in this matter the two run together : our interest coincides with our honour.

It is curious how often this is the case. It is one of the old optimistic beliefs of nineteenth-century liberalism, and one which is often ridiculed, that a nation's duty generally does coincide with its interest. No doubt one can find abundant exceptions, but I believe that in the main, for nations as for individuals, real palpable conscious dishonesty or wickedness is exceedingly unprofitable. This is a more interesting fact than it looks at first sight.

There are many poisons which are simply so nasty that, undisguised, they cannot be swallowed. No power could induce a man or dog to sip or lap a tablespoonful of nicotine or prussic acid. You might coax the dog with future bones, you might persuade the man that the

medicine was just what his health needed ; but their swallowing muscles would refuse to act. Doubtless, in the scheme of nature, the disgust is a provision which saves the race. Now I cannot help suspecting that, much more faintly and more fallibly, the vehement and invincible refusal with which man's sense of honour or religion meets certain classes of proposal, which look profitable enough on the surface, is just such another warning of Nature against poison. In all these cases discussed above, the Christian's martyrdom, the honourable man's refusal to desert his companions, it was not true to say, as we seemed to say, that advantage was on one side and honour on the other. Dishonour would have brought with it a subtler and more lasting disadvantage, greater in its sum than immediate death. If the Christian had sacrificed to the idol, what would his life have been afterwards ? Perhaps his friends would have rejected his example and been martyred ; he would be alone in his shame. Perhaps they would have followed his example, and through him the whole band of the ' faithful ' have betrayed Christ. Not a very enviable choice either way. Without any tall talk or high professions, would it not quite certainly be better for the whole Church and probably for the man himself that he should defy his persecutors and die ? And does not the same now hold for any patriotic Belgian or Serbian who has had a voice in his country's action ? The choice was not on the one hand honour and misery, on the other dishonour and a happy life. It was on the one hand honour and great physical suffering, on the other hand dishonour and a life subtly affected by that dishonour in a thousand unforeseen ways. I do not underrate the tremendous importance of mere physical suffering ; I do not underrate the advantage of living



as long a life as is conveniently possible. But men must die sometime, and, if we dare really to confess the truth, the thing that most of us in our hearts long for, the thing which either means ultimate happiness or else is greater and dearer to men than happiness, is the power to do our duty and, when we die, to have done it. The behaviour of our soldiers and sailors proves it. '*The last I saw of him was on the after bridge, doing well.*' The words come in the official report made by the captain of one of our lost cruisers. But that is the kind of epitaph nearly all men crave for themselves, and the wisest men, I think, even for their nation.

And if we accept this there will follow further consequences. War is not all evil. It is a true tragedy, which must have nobleness and triumph in it as well as disaster. . . . This is dangerous ground. The subject lends itself to foolish bombast, especially when accompanied by a lack of true imagination. We must not begin to praise war without stopping to reflect on the hundreds of thousands of human beings involved in such horrors of pain and indignity that, if here in our ordinary hours we saw one man so treated, the memory would sicken us to the end of our lives ; we must remember the horses, remember the gentle natures brutalized by hardship and filth, and the once decent persons transformed by rage and fear into devils of cruelty. But, when we have realized that, we may venture to see in this wilderness of evil some oases of extraordinary good.

These men who are engaged in what seems like a vast public crime ought, one would think, to fall to something below their average selves, below the ordinary standard of common folk. But do they ? Day after

day come streams of letters from the front, odd stories, fragments of diaries, and the like ; full of the small intimate facts which reveal character, and almost with one accord they show that these men have not fallen, but risen. No doubt there has been some selection in the letters ; to some extent the writers repeat what they wish to have remembered, and say nothing of what they wish to forget. But, when all allowances are made, one cannot read the letters and the dispatches without a feeling of almost passionate admiration for the men about whom they tell. They were not originally a set of men chosen for their peculiar qualities. They were just our ordinary fellow citizens, the men you meet on a crowded pavement. There was nothing to suggest that their conduct in common life was better than that of their neighbours. Yet now, under the stress of war, having a duty before them that is clear and unquestioned and terrible, they are daily doing nobler things than we most of us have ever had the chance of doing, things which we hardly dare hope that we might be able to do. I am not thinking of the rare achievements that win a V.C. or a Cross of the Legion of Honour, but of the common necessary heroism of the average men ; the long endurance, the devoted obedience, the close-banded life in which self-sacrifice is the normal rule, and all men may be forgiven except the man who saves himself at the expense of his comrade. I think of the men who share their last biscuits with a starving peasant, who help wounded comrades through days and nights of horrible retreat, who give their lives to save mates or officers.<sup>1</sup> Or I think again of

<sup>1</sup> For example, to take two stories out of a score :

1. Relating his experiences to a pressman, Lance-Corporal Edmondson, of the Royal Irish Lancers, said : ' There is absolutely no

the expressions on faces that I have seen or read about, something alert and glad and self-respecting in the

doubt that our men are still animated by the spirit of old. I came on a couple of men of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders who had been cut off at Mons. One was badly wounded, but his companion had stuck by him all the time in a country swarming with Germans, and though they had only a few biscuits between them they managed to pull through until we picked them up. I pressed the unwounded man to tell me how they managed to get through the four days on six biscuits, but he always got angry and told me to shut up. I fancy he went without anything, and gave the biscuits to the wounded man. They were offered shelter many times by French peasants, but they were so afraid of bringing trouble on these kind folk that they would never accept shelter. One night they lay out in the open all through a heavy downpour, though there was a house at hand where they could have had shelter. Uhlans were on the prowl, and they would not think of compromising the French people, who would have been glad to help them.'

2. The following story of an unidentified private of the Royal Irish Regiment who deliberately threw away his life in order to warn his comrades of an ambush is told by a wounded corporal of the West Yorkshire Regiment now in hospital in Woolwich :

'The fight in which I got hit was in a little village near to Rheims. We were working in touch with the French corps on our left, and early one morning we were sent ahead to this village, which we had reason to believe was clear of the enemy. On the outskirts we questioned a French lad, but he seemed scared and ran away. We went on through the long narrow street, and just as we were in sight of the end the figure of a man dashed out from a farmhouse on the right. Immediately the rifles began to crack in front, and the poor chap fell dead before he reached us.

'He was one of our men, a private of the Royal Irish Regiment. We learned that he had been captured the previous day by a marauding party of German cavalry, and had been held a prisoner at the farm where the Germans were in ambush for us. He tumbled to their game, and though he knew that if he made the slightest sound they would kill him, he decided to make a dash to warn us of what was in store. He had more than a dozen bullets in him, and there was not the slightest hope for him. We carried him into a house until the fight was over, and then we buried him next day with military honours. His identification disk and everything else was

eyes of those who are going to the front, and even of the wounded who are returning. 'Never once,' writes one correspondent, 'not once since I came to France have I seen among the soldiers an angry face or heard an angry word. . . . They are always quiet, orderly, and wonderfully cheerful.' And no one who has followed the war need be told of their heroism. I do not forget the thousands left on the battlefield to die, or the groaning of the wounded sounding all day between the crashes of the guns. But there is a strange deep gladness as well. 'One feels an extraordinary freedom', says a young Russian officer, 'in the midst of death, with the bullets whistling round. The same with all the soldiers. The wounded all want to get well and return to the fight. They fight with tears of joy in their eyes.'

Human nature is a mysterious thing, and man finds his weal and woe not in the obvious places. To have something before you, clearly seen, which you know you must do, and can do, and will spend your utmost strength and perhaps your life in doing, that is one form at least of very high happiness, and one that appeals—the facts prove it—not only to saints and heroes but to average men. Doubtless the few who are wise enough and have enough imagination may find opportunity for that same happiness in everyday life, but in war ordinary men find it. This is the inward triumph which lies at the heart of the great tragedy.

missing, so that we could only put over his grave the tribute that was paid to a greater: "He saved others; himself he could not save." There wasn't a dry eye among us when we laid him to rest in that little village.'





# OXFORD PAMPHLETS

## 1914

---

Crown 8vo, from 12 to 40 pages each. Also in series of five Pamphlets, stiff covers. One Shilling net each series. 33 Pamphlets have now (18 November) been issued and others are in preparation. The historical pieces are illustrated by sketch-maps

---

### I

#### 1.) The Deeper Causes of the War.

By W. SANDAY. 3d. net. *Fifth Impression.*

The psychology of Prussian militarism ; German public opinion and Germany's aggressive ambitions.

#### 2. To the Christian Scholars of Europe and America: A Reply from Oxford to the German ' Address to Evangelical Christians '. 2d. net. *Fourth Impression.*

The answer of Oxford theologians to a recent manifesto of the German evangelical theologians. This manifesto, which is reproduced in the present pamphlet, argues that Germany is in no sense responsible for the present war. The Oxford reply states that the German theologians cannot have studied either the events which led up to the war or the political utterances of their own countrymen.

#### 3. The Responsibility for the War.

By W. G. S. ADAMS. 2d. net.

A brief discussion of the question of responsibility : 1. Austria and Serbia ; 2. The responsibility of Russia ; 3. The intervention of England.

#### 4. Great Britain and Germany.

By SPENSER WILKINSON. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*

Three letters to the *Springfield Republican* : 1. By Prof. Spenser Wilkinson, stating Great Britain's case ; 2. By Prof. John W. Burgess of the University of Columbia, stating Germany's case ; 3. By Prof. Wilkinson, in reply to Prof. Burgess.

#### 5. ' Just for a Scrap of Paper.'

By ARTHUR HASSALL. 1d. net. *Fourth Impression.*

Explains why England stands for the sanctity of European treaty-law.

## II

6. The Germans, their Empire, and how they have made it. By C. R. L. FLETCHER. 2d. net. *Fourth Impression.*  
A historical account of Prussian policy from the seventeenth century.

7. The Germans, their Empire, and what they covet. By C. R. L. FLETCHER. 2d. net. *Fourth Impression.*  
An account of the ambitions avowed by the Pan-German school.

8. Might is Right.

By Sir WALTER RALEIGH. 2d. net. *Second Impression.*  
Why Germany may win; what will happen if she wins; why we believe she will not win.

9. Austrian Policy since 1867.

By MURRAY BEAVEN. 3d. net. *Second Impression.*  
Austrian policy in the Balkans has been of the 'offensive-defensive' order. The Archduke Francis Ferdinand might have saved Austria from rushing to destruction; but 1912 was the beginning of the end.

10. Italian Policy since 1870.

By KEITH FEILING. 2d. net. *Second Impression.*  
Italian policy has been and must be guided by her own interests. The results of her colonial policy have not yet been satisfactory enough to tempt her into adventures.

## III

11. French Policy since 1871.

By F. MORGAN and H. W. C. DAVIS. 2d. net. *Fourth Impression.*  
A historical sketch, discussing the question whether French policy has been aggressive.

12. Russia: The Psychology of a Nation.

By PAUL VINOGRADOFF. 1d. net. *Fourth Impression.*  
A reply to the German taunt that Russia is still in a state of barbarism, and is the enemy of European civilization.

13. Serbia and the Serbs.

By Sir VALENTINE CHIROL. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*  
A sketch of Serbian history, which is incidentally an indictment of the policy pursued by Austria-Hungary towards the Serbian kingdom.

14. Germany and 'The Fear of Russia'.

By Sir VALENTINE CHIROL. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*  
Shows that before 1879 Germany preferred Russia as an ally to Austria. The ambition of Germany to establish a protectorate over Turkey has led her to assist Austria in the Balkans and so to challenge Russia.

15. The Eastern Question.

By F. F. URQUHART. 3d. net. *Third Impression.*  
The history of the Balkan nations; their future.

## IV

### 16. War against War.

By A. D. LINDSAY. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*

Denies that war is good in itself, or a necessary evil. Power is not the sole or chief end for which the State exists. National greatness, if founded on brute force, cannot endure. International law represents an ideal, but an ideal that may be realized.

### 17. The Value of Small States.

By H. A. L. FISHER. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*

The author argues that the debt of civilization to small states is incalculable. They are useful, at the present time, as laboratories of political experiments and as buffer-states between the greater powers.

### 18. How can War ever be Right?

By GILBERT MURRAY. 2d. net. *Fourth Impression.*

A well-known lover of peace and advocate of pacific policies argues against the Tolstoyan position. Right and honour compelled Britain to make war; and war—like tragedy—is not pure evil.

### 19. The National Principle and the War.

By RAMSAY MUIR. 3d. net. *Second Impression.*

Considers the principle of nationality and its application to the settlement of Europe—particularly of S.E. Europe—after the War.

### 20. Nietzsche and Treitschke: The Worship of Power in Modern Germany.

By E. BARKER. 2d. net. *Fourth Impression.*

An explanation of the main points of interest in the ethical and political doctrines of the German ruling classes.

## V

### 21. The British Dominions and the War.

By H. E. EGERTON. 2d. net. *Second Impression.*

Explains the ideas for which the British Empire stands, and the political and moral issues of the war affecting the Dominions.

### 22. India and the War.

By Sir ERNEST TREVELYAN. 1d. net. *Third Impression.*

Discusses the reasons which account for the striking manifestations of Indian loyalty.

### 23. Is the British Empire the Result of Wholesale Robbery? By H. E. EGERTON. 2d. net.

A historical sketch in answer to a common taunt.

### 24. The Law of Nations and the War.

By A. PEARCE HIGGINS. 2d. net. *Second Impression.*

The violation of Belgian neutrality and the conduct of England to Denmark in 1807; the doctrine of German lawyers that military necessity overrides the laws of war; the balance of power and the sanctity of treaties.

### 25. England's Mission. By W. BENETT. 2d. net.

Answers the question, In what cause are we fighting?

*Published separately and will also appear shortly  
in series.*

## Thoughts on the War.

By GILBERT MURRAY. 2d. net.

An article written in August and now reprinted.

## Bacilli and Bullets.

By Sir WILLIAM OSLER. 1d. net. *Fourth Impression.*

Calls attention to the fact that disease kills more men than the bullet. The most dangerous diseases are preventable by inoculation.

## The Navy and the War.

By J. R. THURSFIELD. 3d. net. *Second Impression.*

Estimates the military and economic value of the silent pressure exercised by our fleet, and warns the faint-hearted and the captious of the perils of lack of faith.

## The Retreat from Mons.

By H. W. C. DAVIS. 3d. net. *Third Impression.*

Introduction; the Dispatch of Sept. 9; the Statement by the War Office, published Aug. 31. Appendixes (soldiers' narratives); two maps.

## The Leading Ideas of British Policy.

By GERARD COLLIER. 2d. net.

Examines the political genius of England.

## Greek Policy since 1882.

By A. J. TOYNBEE. 4d. net.

## Poland, Prussia, and Culture.

By LUDWIK EHRLICH. 3d. net.

The author is a Doctor of the University of Lwow (Lemberg) in Galicia.

## The Germans in Africa.

By EVANS LEWIN. 3d. net.

*Spectator*:—‘These little books are easily the best books of the war—accurate, quietly written, full of knowledge, and quite unspoiled by vainglory or bitterness.’

*Others in preparation.*

OXFORD PAMPHLETS  
1914

---

WAR AGAINST  
WAR

---

BY

A. D. LINDSAY

---

THIRD IMPRESSION

*Price Twopence net*

---

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
HUMPHREY MILFORD  
LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW  
NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE BOMBAY



## I

### The Deeper Causes of the War.

By W. SANDAY. 3d. net. *Third Impression.*

The psychology of Prussian militarism ; German public opinion and Germany's aggressive ambitions.

### To the Christian Scholars of Europe and America : A Reply from Oxford to the German ' Address to Evangelical Christians '. 2d. net. *Second Impression.*

The answer of Oxford theologians to a recent manifesto of the German evangelical theologians. This manifesto, which is reproduced in the present pamphlet, argues that Germany is in no sense responsible for the present war. The Oxford reply states that the German theologians cannot have studied either the events which led up to the war, or the political utterances of their own countrymen.

### The Responsibility for the War. By W. G. S. ADAMS. 2d. net.

A brief discussion of the question of responsibility : 1. Austria and Serbia ; 2. The responsibility of Russia ; 3. The intervention of England.

### Great Britain and Germany.

By SPENSER WILKINSON. 2d. net. *Second Impression.*

Three letters to the *Springfield Republican* : 1. By Prof. Spenser Wilkinson, stating Great Britain's case ; 2. By Prof. John W. Burgess of the University of Columbia, stating Germany's case ; 3. By Prof. Wilkinson, in reply to Prof. Burgess.

### ' Just for a Scrap of Paper.'

By ARTHUR HASSALL. 1d. net. *Third Impression.*

Explains why England stands for the sanctity of European treaty-law.

## II

### The Germans, their Empire, and how they have made it. By C. R. L. FLETCHER. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*

A historical account of Prussian policy from the seventeenth century.

### The Germans, their Empire, and what they covet.

By C. R. L. FLETCHER. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*

An account of the ambitions avowed by the Pan-German school.

### Might is Right. By Sir WALTER RALEIGH. 2d. net.

Why Germany may win ; what will happen if she wins ; why we believe she will not win.

### Austrian Policy since 1867. By MURRAY BEAVEN. 3d. net.

Austrian policy in the Balkans has been of the ' offensive-defensive ' order. The Archduke Francis Ferdinand might have saved Austria from rushing to destruction ; but 1912 was the beginning of the end.

### Italian Policy since 1870. By KEITH FEILING. 2d. net

Italian policy has been and must be guided by her own interests. The results of her colonial policy have not yet been satisfactory enough to tempt her into adventures.

*Published separately and will also appear shortly  
in series.*

## The British Dominions and the War.

By H. E. EGERTON. 2d. net. *Second Impression.*

Explains the ideas for which the British Empire stands, and the political and moral issues of the war affecting the Dominions.

## Is the British Empire the Result of Wholesale Robbery?

By H. E. EGERTON. 2d. net.

A historical sketch in answer to a common taunt.

## India and the War.

By Sir ERNEST TREVELYAN. 1d. net. *Second Impression.*

Discusses the reasons which account for the striking manifestations of Indian loyalty.

## Bacilli and Bullets.

By Sir WILLIAM OSLER. 1d. net. *Third Impression.*

Calls attention to the fact that disease kills more men than the bullet. The most dangerous diseases are preventible by inoculation.

## The Navy and the War.

By J. R. THURSFIELD. 3d. net. *Second Impression.*

Estimates the military and economic value of the silent pressure exercised by our fleet, and warns the faint-hearted and the captious of the perils of lack of faith.

## The Retreat from Mons.

By H. W. C. DAVIS. 3d. net. *Second Impression.*

Introduction; the Dispatch of Sept. 9; the Statement by the War Office, published Aug. 31. Appendixes (soldiers' narratives); two maps.

## The Law of Nations and the War.

By A. PEARCE HIGGINS. 2d. net.

The violation of Belgian neutrality and the conduct of England to Denmark in 1807; the doctrine of German lawyers that military necessity overrides the laws of war; the balance of power and the sanctity of treaties.

*Others in preparation.*

## French Policy since 1871.

By F. MORGAN and H. W. C. DAVIS. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*

A historical sketch, discussing the question whether French policy has been aggressive.

## Russia: The Psychology of a Nation.

By PAUL VINOGRADOFF. 1d. net. *Third Impression.*

A reply to the German taunt that Russia is still in a state of barbarism, and is the enemy of European civilization

## Serbia and the Serbs.

By Sir VALENTINE CHIROL. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*

A sketch of Serbian history, which is incidentally an indictment of the policy pursued by Austria-Hungary towards the Serbian kingdom.

## Germany and 'The Fear of Russia'.

By Sir VALENTINE CHIROL. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*

Shows that before 1879 Germany preferred Russia as an ally to Austria. The ambition of Germany to establish a protectorate over Turkey has led her to assist Austria in the Balkans and so to challenge Russia.

## The Eastern Question.

By F. F. URQUHART. 3d. net. *Second Impression.*

The history of the Balkan nations; their future.

## IV

## War against War.

By A. D. LINDSAY. 2d. net. *Second Impression.*

Denies that war is good in itself, or a necessary evil. Power is not the sole or chief end for which the State exists. National greatness, if founded on brute force, cannot endure. International law represents an ideal, but an ideal that may be realized.

## The Value of Small States.

By H. A. L. FISHER. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*

The author argues that the debt of civilization to small states is incalculable. They are useful, at the present time, as laboratories of political experiments and as buffer-states between the greater powers.

## How can War ever be Right?

By GILBERT MURRAY. 2d. net. *Second Impression.*

A well-known lover of peace and advocate of pacific policies argues against the Tolstoyan position. Right and honour compelled Britain to make war; and war—like tragedy—is not pure evil.

## The National Principle and the War.

By RAMSAY MUIR. 3d. net.

Considers the principle of nationality and its application to the settlement of Europe—particularly of S.E. Europe—after the War.

## Nietzsche and Treitschke: The Worship of Power in Modern Germany.

By E. BARKER. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*

An explanation of the main points of interest in the ethical and political doctrines of the German ruling classes.

## WAR AGAINST WAR

THE war in which we are now engaged has been called 'a war against war'. It is certain that most people in this country have not wished this war but have looked on it as a hateful necessity, and combine with a determination to see the war through a resolve to do all that can be done to prevent such a war recurring. We feel it an intolerable disgrace to Christendom that this thing should have happened. We recognize that for the general condition of Europe which made such a war possible we may, along with other nations, have been partly to blame, yet we hold that in the immediate situation we were guiltless and that it made most for the eventual peace of Europe that we should fight. In that sense we are making war against war, and we can endure all the suffering and horror which war involves if we can sustain ourselves with the hope that we shall make a recurrence of such things impossible for our children, that we shall once for all do away not only with actual wars like the present, but with the restless peace which preceded it, with the wasteful rivalry in armaments, with the uneasy searching after alliances and the balance of power.

It is well therefore that we should ask ourselves what ground we have for our hope, and how we can best realize it. For there are some who say that such a hope is an illusion; that if we cherish the comfortable belief that

we are making war against war we are only refusing to face the facts; that our belief is based on hypocrisy and blindness. Let us therefore examine the arguments of those who hold that war against war is a delusive ideal.

Our critics are of two very different schools. There are those who hold that it is of no use trying to abolish war, for war between nations must always exist; there are others who believe that war is unnecessary and futile but that it cannot be abolished by war (that were to cast out Satan by Satan), but only by our all recognizing the horror and futility of war and refusing to fight. The first would probably approve the present war but laugh at our description of our ideal. The second would approve our ideal but condemn unsparingly the method we have taken to attain it. We must therefore ask ourselves whether or no there need necessarily be war between nations, and if there need not, whether war itself can ever be a weapon against war, can ever help to make war impossible, or at least improbable—if impossible it can never be made. These questions clearly concern the elementary principles which govern the relations of states to one another or the elements of international policy.

We need not deal with our two classes of critics separately. For if we examine the arguments of the first class, we shall probably find that we shall be compelled by the way to answer those of the second.

The supporters of the doctrine that wars are inevitable may be divided into those who hold that war is an evil, though one that cannot be avoided, and those who like General von Bernhardi and some writers and preachers in this country do not want to abolish war. Such persons as the latter must not be confused with those



who hold that in certain circumstances war is desirable. Most of us might agree to that but deplore the circumstances which called for war. General von Bernhardt thinks that it would be a catastrophe to mankind if war were abolished; he believes that the natural relations of nations to one another are enmity and competition, which, unlike the envy and competition of individuals, have no higher power to control them, and thinks that such enmity and competition are good in themselves.

The question whether war is in itself a good thing need hardly be discussed. It has plausibility only when war is identified with any kind of competition or struggle and justified on biological grounds. A moment's consideration will show that the growth of civilization and peace has not eliminated struggle and competition, but changed their nature. Progress consists largely in raising the terms on which competition is carried on, and the qualities in which men compete; and in the higher forms of competition co-operation plays a greater and greater part, and the success of one competitor means less and less the death or ruin of the other. We think it a good thing that there should be rivalry between German and French and English culture, and that the best should prevail, but we think that it ought to prevail because it is the best culture, not because those who have made it happen to be more ruthless in war or less scrupulous about treaties than are others.

Now though there may be much that is ignoble as well as much that is noble in the rivalry and competition of peace, no one would deny that the life of a modern nation at peace is better than it would be in a state of internecine strife. No one can disagree with Hobbes's famous description of a time of war where every man's hand is against his neighbour's:

‘In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain; and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.’

The most inspiring facts in modern war, the common devotion and patriotism of a whole nation, are possible only because that nation has been at peace with itself. If it fights to defend its culture, that culture is possible only through peace; for in war, as Thucydides said, we lose that ‘margin of everyday life’ in which culture can flourish. There is no sense in defending war as a good thing in itself. Even General von Bernhardt does not desire war between the component parts of Germany. All Germans would agree that the united Germany of the end of the nineteenth century is preferable to Germany of the Thirty Years’ War.

Further, there can be no sense in saying that men *must* make war on each other, as though that were a fundamental element in their nature. For as we look back in history we can see how within the area now occupied by any of the great nations continual internecine strife has given place to settled and orderly government. It is true that we have not made civil war absolutely impossible. Orderly and constitutional government demands of a people a certain mutual forbearance and respect for mutual rights in which under stress of circumstances they may fail. Nevertheless no one would say that if we determined so to act that our children should never suffer the horrors of civil

war, we were following an illusory ideal. Rather we feel that, thanks to the political good sense of our ancestors, that ideal is already practically realized and we are the children who are benefiting by it.

If towns and districts which once lived in a state of war with one another can without giving up their local individuality, unite to form one nation under orderly and peaceable government, why cannot nations in turn give up war among themselves? Why should the relations between men of different nations be different from those between the men who now form one nation? These are the questions which those who disbelieve in the possibility of putting an end to war, have got to answer.

There are two kinds of answers given to such questions, based on very different considerations and very different conceptions of the state.

It is said sometimes that war is a relation between states and not between individuals, and that the relations between states are and must necessarily be different in kind from those existing between individuals; that the sole aim and duty of the state is and must be the acquisition of power. Within the state, the upholders of this doctrine would say, there ought to be justice and respect for law and indeed all the virtues. For only so are common life and culture possible. But the state is the supreme bond of social life. Beyond it there can be nothing. Security and culture having been given to the individual inside the state, each state is self-sufficing and has no need of law in its relations with its neighbours. The world is thus thought of as a collection of independent sovereign states, who acknowledge no common law and who are engaged in a constant struggle for power amongst themselves. The choice before every

nation is, in Bernhardi's words, 'world power or downfall'. Every nation must strive after power in order that it may impose its civilization and ideas upon the world. This ideal, when stated with Bernhardi's downrightness, is so repellent that it is difficult to have patience to answer it. It is an obvious abomination. Many of us have been familiar with it in the writings of German professors but have never imagined that any one could really believe that sort of stuff. The apparent obsession of the German mind with this astounding doctrine is a portent which we can only wonder at and deplore.

For look at the doctrine a little more closely. In the first place, this attempt to distinguish entirely between the relations between individuals and between states is obvious nonsense. The power of Germany over Alsace Lorraine or over Belgium means, if it means anything at all, that a certain number of human beings, Belgians or Alsatians, are forced to act in various ways against their inclinations at the commands of other individuals, not because they admire or respect these individuals but from fear of the consequences of disobedience. The will of Germany is decided by the wills of individual Germans. It is being exercised at this moment upon individual Belgians, with what results of suffering and anguish to the victims and of brutalization to the oppressors we are every day learning. The power of one nation over another which can be gained by war means this and nothing else than this, in whatever various forms it may be exercised. If we believe that it is not good for one man to have arbitrary power over others, if we believe that slavery is bad for the master as well as for the slave, we must believe it to be equally bad for one

nation to rule over another against its will. To adapt Lincoln's words: No nation is good enough to rule over another nation without that other's consent.

Further, the strength of a nation to exercise dominion over other nations is very limited. We sometimes think of a nation becoming a world-power by steady increase of the territory it possesses, and there seems no reason at first why such a process should not go on indefinitely. But a nation's strength depends upon the individuals who compose the nation, and their readiness to make all those efforts and sacrifices which the exercise of power demands. The number and readiness of such individuals is not increased simply by changes in the map. A nation cannot grow stronger by conquest if it has to hold down those it conquers. Conquest makes it stronger only if it puts those it conquers on some kind of level with itself and manages to inspire them with its ideals. The Prussian domination of Germany has apparently meant that most Germans have been inspired with Prussian ideals and united Germany is stronger than was Prussia alone. But then Prussia did not conquer Germany. The Prussian possession of Poland and of Alsace Lorraine has not had the same effect, and the efforts of Germany to hold down those provinces have not strengthened but weakened her. The self-governing dominions and India are a source of strength to the British Empire just because or in so far as they share and approve of England's political aims. If they did not so share, if we had tried to treat them merely as possessions which gave us strength to exercise our will on other nations as we pleased, the Empire would have been the source of fatal weakness that the Germans, arguing logically from profoundly mistaken premisses, imagined that it would be. The ideal of world-power is thus an impossible as well



as an evil ideal. That does not mean, as some writers imply, that there is therefore no need to resist it. It is impossible just because it must drive so many men to resist it; and an evil ideal may be unattainable in its completeness and yet may lead to endless suffering, misery, and wrong in its partial fulfilment.

So much for the doctrine that the sole aim of nations is power. But if we have disposed of that doctrine, we have not thereby shown that states are or ought to be governed in their relations to one another by the same principles of conduct as are individuals. Many persons who would not subscribe to Bernhardt's views still hold that ordinary moral obligations do not apply to nations. They hold either that the behaviour of nations is governed by mysterious forces, sometimes described as fate or destiny, or that it is the duty of nations to look after their own interests, and that when the interests of nations conflict there is bound to be war. Such persons would describe the conflict between Germany and England either as the result of both countries following their destiny, or as due to the fact that both Germany and England had to pursue their own interests; it was Germany's interest to expand, it was England's to stop that expansion, and hence war had to come.

Talk about national destiny is usually nonsense. It implies that nations have no intelligent control over their actions. It is commonly only a hypocritical way of excusing actions for which there is no decent excuse. It is true that the outcome of national actions depends upon the joint effect of a large number of factors, which cannot all be known to the statesman who commits the nation to action, and that therefore a statesman has much less power of anticipating accurately the outcome of actions than has a man who is acting for himself in

ordinary life. That, however, does not acquit him or the nation which follows him of responsibility for his deliberate actions: rather it increases that responsibility. Even Bismarck has borne witness to that. In a famous passage in his *Reminiscences* he dissents from what is known as the policy of a 'preventive war', the policy that a nation ought to make war at a time that is favourable to itself if it thinks that otherwise war will be made on it in the future. He opposed that policy 'in the conviction that even victorious wars cannot be justified unless they are forced upon one, and that we cannot see the cards of Providence far enough ahead to anticipate historical development according to one's own calculation'. If his successors had remained faithful to his teaching, we should not have had this war.

The second view that nations must follow their own interests is more plausible because it is the duty of statesmen to think primarily of the interests of their country, and it is from studying the actions of statesmen in international relations that we tend to form our opinion of the real nature of such relations. The truth is that the statesman, having power to commit the nation to action, is acting on behalf of or as a trustee of the nation. His line of action is therefore restricted. He has no right of himself to sacrifice his country's interests because he thinks it right to be generous. As a trustee his first duty is to his country. But statesmen are not the only persons in such a position. We are all familiar with the position of a trustee. We admire the man who sacrifices his own interests to others, we do not so admire the man who sacrifices to others the interests of his family or of those for whom he is trustee. That does not mean that a trustee has no moral obligations to other men. He has no right to assume that those for

whom he is acting are prepared to be generous : he must assume that they are prepared to be just. Further, the fact that we have some one acting in our name does not absolve us from the responsibility of seeing that his actions are right. On the contrary, it throws the responsibility on us.

The fallacy arises from the fact that we constantly think of men who are not acting collectively as nations, as though they were acting as isolated individuals. But men are very seldom in a position when they can so act. A nation is not a collection of isolated units. We are limited by all manner of ties, family, kinship, religion, nationality, citizenship ; and our duties to our fellow men are affected by the existence of these ties. Men have special duties to their family, to their fellow trade unionists, to their coreligionists, and inasmuch as the interests of these several associations may conflict, it is often hard for a man to know how to reconcile conflicting claims. Family loyalty, church loyalty, trade union loyalty seem often to set at enmity men who as individuals are really good friends. No one, however, really thinks that these different loyalties cannot be reconciled, or that because we can see no reconciliation between conflicting groups, therefore to one of the groups we have no duties. No one thinks that the best citizen is the man who has no loyalty to his family, his church, or his trade union. The possibility of conflict between these various claims is a problem for the statesman, but we do not think it an insurmountable problem. The relation of nations to one another is analogous to the relation of families to one another. Family loyalty may become a danger to the state if it means entire disregard of all other obligations, but it may and ought to be the bulwark of the state. And

state loyalty must be added to it, not substituted for it. Loyalty to our country may endanger international peace if it means disregard of all other nations. It need not do that, and we become 'Good Europeans' if we think of Europe not instead of but as well as our own country.

We may claim now to have answered the doctrine that states are quite different from individuals and are therefore not governed by moral obligations in their relations to one another, and that war is therefore a necessity. Let us now turn to a second line of argument.

This second argument is that peace, the decent observance of law and respect for mutual rights are possible within a state only because they are preserved by the force of the state. Law, according to this argument, can only exist when there is force to protect it. There can therefore be no such thing as international law, because there is no power supreme over the separate states which could compel observance of law. So long, then, as separate states exist, there can be nothing but enmity between them, and the only hope of universal peace is that one state should be powerful enough to compel all the others to obedience. We have lately been given two very good instances of this argument by German professors. *The Times* of September 11th contained a brief report of a lecture on the war delivered at Charlottenburg by Professor von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff. He is reported to have said that the present war showed how useless international law was without a superior power to enforce it, and that the only hope for the world was that Germany and Austria should win and *dictate peace and the observance of law to Europe*. Professor Ostwald, a famous German

scientist, has written to a friend in America a letter on the war in which he says :

‘According to the course of the war up to the present time’ (he was writing very early in September) ‘European peace seems to me nearer than ever before. We pacifists must only understand that unhappily the time was not yet sufficiently developed to establish peace by the peaceful way. If Germany, as everything now seems to make probable, is victorious in the struggle, not only with Russia and France, but attains the further end of destroying the source from which for two or three centuries all European strife has been nourished and intensified, namely the English policy of World Dominion, then will Germany, fortified on the one side by its military superiority, on the other side by the eminently peaceful sentiment of the greatest part of its people and especially of the German Emperor, dictate peace to the rest of Europe. I hope especially that the future treaty of peace will in the first place provide effectually that a European war such as the present can never again break out.’

These utterances are worth noting, for they are the views of two very eminent and fine Germans on how to make ‘war against war’. We on our side may perhaps have a dream similar save in our choice of the country which shall play the principal rôle. Such an ideal seems at first sight feasible. Did not Rome by force dictate peace to Europe? has not England dictated it to India? Why should not Germany or Great Britain dictate peace to Europe? All such dreams are vitiated by the most fruitful source of fallacy in international politics, the refusal to look at the situation from the point of view of other nations. Professor Ostwald at one and the same time thinks that England’s world dominion has been the source of all war, and that Germany’s world dominion would produce peace. The



elementary fact about the European situation is that there are a number of European nations who are more or less equal and, what is just as important, who think that they are.

If Europe can only be given peace by force, it can never be given peace, because no one state in Europe is strong enough to hold down the rest. Professor Wilamowitz-Moellendorff talks of Germany *and Austria* enforcing peace; we, if we are honest, talk of the *Allies*. That means that we assume that two or more independent nations can act together without being themselves held down by force. And if two or three are able to observe mutual obligations, why not a dozen? Even two nations can only hold together if they observe law and justice in their mutual relations. In the Roman Empire and in India one strong homogeneous state enforced peace on a number of smaller disunited states. That is possible. The conditions are entirely different when, as in modern Europe, the great nations are more or less equal.

And as we had occasion to notice before, no nation can ever permanently hold down another nation or nations by *force*. If its empire is to last, it must rest on the consent of those it governs. The British Empire is united now, and is able to use united force in this war, just because the nations which make it up have not been kept down by force. We are rejoicing in the support of the Empire in the very year that we learned, somewhat to our disappointment, that we had no power to enforce in South Africa our views of the proper treatment of labour leaders.

These obvious facts show that there is something wrong with the theory that law rests upon force. It may perhaps be worth while looking more closely at

the part played by force in the state. For if we understand what binds men together in a law-abiding society, we may see how states may be bound together to a common observance of law.

At first sight it looks as though law did obviously depend upon force. All states use force to compel the obedience to law, and the use of force is often looked upon as the peculiar characteristic of the state. No one, unless he be a theoretical anarchist, imagines that states and the ordered life they make possible could exist if they entirely refused to use force to compel obedience to law. This seems but a short step from saying that the state depends upon force, and that the setting up of an irresistible force is the necessary step to the making of a state. The opinion is widely held that force is at least the ultimate basis of the state. But whose is the force on which the state depends? It is not the Government's, for they are in a minority; nor even the force of what are called the forces of the administration, for their force depends on their having been organized and supported by the action and authority of other people. We all know that no government can enforce a law which its whole people is determined to break. If we then say that the force at the basis of the state is the force of the majority of its inhabitants, we must see that the majority has force to use only because it is prepared for concerted action. Force does not organize men who would otherwise be at enmity with one another. It is itself brought into being by organization, by the power and readiness of the people to act together to respect certain principles and to enforce certain laws. Force does not make government possible. On the contrary it is the mutual trust and sense of a common interest which makes possible the force which govern-

ment uses. At the same time it is important to notice that the use of force is necessary to a government. For although it is in the general interest that men should keep the law and respect their obligations to one another, occasions continually occur when an individual might profit by disregarding his obligations, and profit more just because other men kept their obligations to him. It is this conflict between the private interests of individuals and the general interests of the community which makes force necessary. Force seems to be the basis of the state because the state must be prepared to enforce the law on any member of the state who may violate it, but the state can only use its force because most of its citizens support its action and do not wish to violate its law : in other words, because most of them do not need to be controlled by force.

The argument then that international law can have no validity because there is no power above the different states to enforce it is invalid. For law does not depend upon force but upon respect for law. International law is of much narrower scope than state law and less effective, because there is yet little mutual trust and little power of common action between members of different states. Common political action is possible only between men who to some extent understand, respect, and trust one another. Such mutual trust and respect is of slow growth, especially between men who are organized in different groups, with different history and traditions and to some extent different ways of life. That is the real difference between the problem of political union in a nation and in Europe. The elements which go to make up a nation have behind them a long tradition of common understanding and of a sense of belonging together. The nations of Europe have behind

them a long tradition of enmity and jealousy. Some modern writers have thought that the enormous increase in economic relations between different nations which has marked the last two generations is of itself creating that mutual trust which will make war impossible. That is, I think, a vain hope. Economic relations give us an opportunity to understand and know each other better, but they also produce new sources of rivalry. For it is of the nature of economic relations that they can be entered into by men who are in spirit more rivals than co-operators, and who have no real purpose in common.

Are we then to wait for peace till in course of time we come fully to understand and respect all men? That were to wait for the millennium. If the state had waited for mutual understanding amongst all its members, it would have waited till law and the state itself was unnecessary. The sense of common interest and the respect of mutual rights at the basis of many states is weak enough, but an orderly society is secured in so far as that respect for rights is formulated in law and enforced by the organized force of the community. The common principles of action on which modern Europe has been able to agree are not very elaborate or far-reaching. They are none the less precious for that. The only way to make war impossible is at one and the same time to do all we can to increase common understanding between different nations, and to keep safe the position we have reached by the strengthening and enforcing of the public law of Europe, such as it is.

Modern Europe, with its distrustful rival nations, might not unjustly be compared to the Iceland of the Sagas. Iceland in the tenth century was a land of independent vikings, living each on his farm, owning no

political superior. They are proud, distrustful of one another, and intensely warlike. Yet they are kept from utter barbarism by their respect for law. The Iceland of the Sagas has an elaborate law with no State to enforce it. It depends entirely on public opinion, on a bad man's knowledge that if he breaks the law, not only his enemies but men with whom he had no quarrel will be against him. They will not let him marry into their families if he wants to, they will not help him if he gets into a difficulty, and if he shows more than usual disregard of the law they will combine to make an end of him, though they themselves may get no immediate profit from so doing. There is a famous passage in *Burnt Njal Saga* describing the coming of Christianity to Iceland and the dissensions that arose from the conflict of Christian and Pagan law. All Iceland came together to the Hill of Laws, and the speaker of the laws was asked his opinion. 'Thorgeir' (that was his name) 'lay all that day on the ground, and spread a cloak over his head, so that no man spoke with him; but the day after men went to the Hill of Laws and then Thorgeir bade them be silent and spoke thus: "It seems to me as though our matters were come to a deadlock, if we are not all to have one and the same law; for if there be a sundering of the laws, then there will be a sundering of the peace and we shall never be able to live in the land."'

If it was possible for the vikings of Iceland to submit to a common law though there was no power outside themselves to force them to do it, it should not be impossible for the nations of Europe. In no other way can we hope for lasting peace. For in this way alone we claim for ourselves nothing more than we allow to other nations. We have been told in the past that peace was best preserved by our being so strongly armed



that no one dare attack us. But because every nation acted on such advice, Europe became an armed camp where peace was almost as burdensome as war, and where the militarism was encouraged and fostered by which this war has been produced. We have also been told that we must preserve the balance of power in Europe. The doctrine of the balance of power implies that nations are natural rivals and enemies and make treaties with one another only for their own advantage. It is natural for a diplomacy which aims at the balance of power to regard treaties as having no real binding force. They are made purely in the self-interest of the nations who enter into them; when circumstances change and they no longer serve the interests of one of these nations, their whole basis and reason is gone. The balance of power too, when the powers balanced are ponderous and unwieldy and the equilibrium unstable, has a way of being upset by circumstances over which we have no control. This war has largely been brought about by Germany's efforts to correct the balance of power which the Balkan wars had disturbed to her disadvantage. Further, while all nations think they are trying to create a balance of power, they are really seeking an over-balance in their own favour. That they cannot possibly all get, and hence must arise rivalry and eventually war. Common respect for public law alone calls not for rivalry but for common action. The neutrality of the small states of Europe like Belgium was agreed to by the joint act of the Great Powers of Europe, not in the interests of this or that Power but in the interests of European peace. In fighting to defend that agreement, in fighting for the public law of Europe, we are fighting to give peace its only sure foundation. To this doctrine Mr. Asquith has recently

in his speech at Dublin given expression. I cannot end this paper better than by quoting his words:

‘I should like if I might for a moment, beyond this inquiry into causes and motives, to ask your attention and that of my fellow-countrymen to the end which in this war we ought to keep in view. Forty-four years ago, at the time of the war of 1870, Mr. Gladstone used these words. He said: “The greatest triumph of our time will be the enthronement of the idea of public right as the governing idea of European politics.” Nearly fifty years have passed. Little progress, it seems, has yet been made towards that good and beneficent change, but it seems to me to be now at this moment as good a definition as we can have of our European policy.

‘The idea of public right, what does it mean when translated into concrete terms? It means, first and foremost, the clearing of the ground by the definite repudiation of militarism as the governing factor in the relation of States and of the future moulding of the European world. It means, next, that room must be found and kept for the independent existence and the free development of the smaller nationalities, each for the life of history a corporate consciousness of its own. Belgium, Holland, and Switzerland, and Scandinavian countries, Greece and the Balkan States—they must be recognized as having exactly as good a title as their more powerful neighbours, more powerful in strength and in wealth—exactly as good a title to a place in the sun. And it means finally, or it ought to mean, perhaps by a slow and gradual process, the substitution for force, for the clashing of competing ambition, for groupings and alliances and a precarious equipoise, the substitution for all these things of a real European partnership based

on the recognition of equal right and established and enforced by a common will. A year ago that would have sounded like a Utopian idea. It is probably one that may not or will not be realized either to-day or to-morrow. If and when this war is decided in favour of the Allies it will at once come within the range, and before long within the grasp, of European statesmanship.'

No. 20

OXFORD PAMPHLETS  
1914

---

NIETZSCHE AND  
TREITSCHKE

The Worship of Power  
In Modern Germany

---

BY

ERNEST BARKER, M.A.

FELLOW OF NEW COLLEGE

---

FIFTH IMPRESSION

*Price Twopence net*

---

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

HUMPHREY MILFORD

LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW

NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE BOMBAY





## THE WORSHIP OF POWER IN MODERN GERMANY

### I

DURING the great days of the French Revolution and the War of Liberation Germany produced two great thinkers. One was Kant: the other was Hegel. Kant was the philosopher of Duty, stern daughter of the voice of God—duty, supreme over all alleged ‘interests’, and dominant over all pretensions of power. He held before Europe the ideal of a permanent peace achieved by ‘a federal league of nations, in which even the weakest member looks for protection to the united power’. An austere sense of law, pervading and controlling at once individual life, the life of the State, and even the life of the European comity or commonwealth of States—this was the note of his teaching. Hegel, in reaction against what he regarded as the bare austerity of Kant, preached a different doctrine. Duty, he held, was the fulfilling of a station in the community. It was an empty concept apart from the State. Faithfully to discharge his function as a member of his State—this is the duty of man. Along this line Hegel—perhaps influenced by admiration for Prussia—advanced to a conception of the State as something of an absolute, something of an ultimate, to which the individual must be adjusted, and from his relation to which he draws his meaning and being. The State, he could write, is the Universal, which has become ‘for

itself', consciously and explicitly, all that it is 'in itself', in its latent and potential nature. Thus self-conscious and self-moved, it is a real individual, which can exist by itself in the world as an ultimate. As for the citizen, the apparent individual—why, he is an atom, which, 'seeking to be a centre for itself, is brought by the State back into the life of the universal substance'. Absolute, ultimate, universal—the State becomes a sort of transcendental majesty, *cui nihil viget simile aut secundum*. It is significant that Hegel, in his philosophy of the State, devotes less than a page to international law: it is still more significant that he can say, 'the state of war shows the omnipotence of the State in its individuality; country and fatherland are then the power, which convicts of nullity the independence of individuals.' It is here—in this neglect of international law, and in this glorification of war—that one lays one's finger on a permanent and essential attribute of German political thought and practice. If Kant is the philosopher of one side of Prussia, if he expresses that deep sense of duty which made Frederic the Great the first servant of the State, Hegel is the philosopher of another side, and Hegel expresses that sense of the absolute finality of the State which made Frederic seize Silesia in spite of an international guarantee of the integrity of the Austrian dominions, and impelled him to carry Prussia further and further along the paths of militarism.

Since the days of Sadowa and Sedan Germany has produced two other thinkers, Nietzsche and Treitschke. Both were ultimately of Slavonic origin; both were professors, the one of philosophy, the other of history; both lived and thought and taught in the new Germany which sprang from the great wars of 1866 and 1870.

They caught the spirit, and they helped to make the spirit, of that new Germany whose note, it has been well said, is *subdual*. Power, more power, and always power—this was the gospel which they found, and preached. ‘Political questions are questions of power’ was Bismarck’s principle. ‘Two souls dwell in the German nation,’ a Berlin professor wrote.

The German nation has been called the nation of poets and thinkers, and it may be proud of the name. To-day it may again be called the nation of masterful combatants, as which it originally appeared in history.

The spirit of mastery was abroad : it could be seen in State policy ; it could be seen in a vast economic expansion ; it could be seen in the grandiose massivity of those buildings, ‘veritable mastodons of masonry’, which modern Germany loves to erect. Of that spirit Nietzsche and Treitschke have, in very different ways, both been the prophets. The one was a bitter enemy of Christianity : the other was a stern Protestant. The one detested the ‘bovine spirit of nationality’ and denounced Prussian militarism : the other preached exclusive Germanism and the glory of the sword. But both alike made power their watchword ; both alike loved war, and striving for mastery, and subdual ; both hated England.

## II

The name Nietzsche is said to be derived from a Slavonic word signifying ‘humble’. Nietzsche, however, was inclined to claim a noble origin from the counts of Nietzki, and he certainly did not love humility. It is another paradox that the man who boasted himself ‘the most essential opponent of Christianity’ should

have been the son of a village pastor. He was born in 1834: he died in 1900. He served in the army for a few months in 1867, and during the campaign of 1870 he worked for a little time in the German Ambulance Corps. For ten years, from 1869 to 1879, he acted as professor of Classical Philology in the University of Bâle; for the next ten years he was a wandering invalid; for the last eleven years of his life he was insane.

The stuff on which his mind worked was partly Greek literature and art, and partly biology, of which he acquired in later years a somewhat superficial knowledge. From the one he drew an aesthetic interpretation of the world, as a thing non-moral but potentially beautiful; from the other he drew the vision of the new beauty which might enter the world through the evolution of the superman. It was, perhaps, from both, or rather his own interpretation of both, that he drew his primary premiss. Life, that premiss ran, is essentially 'amoral'. The world is simply an aesthetic phenomenon, neither good nor bad—that is to say, in effect, neither beautiful nor ugly. All things in the world—all intentions and actions of men—are amoral. 'There are no moral phenomena; there is merely a moral interpretation of phenomena.' Nothing is, but thinking makes it so; and all so-called moral values are the creations of human interpretation. To these creations we must address a simple question. Are these existing valuations of intentions and acts as moral or immoral, as beautiful or ugly, of any real value? Or must they be 'transvalued' to suit a new and higher standard?

To answer such a question we must first of all examine existing values critically. If we do so, we find that

they are not absolute but relative. They are relative to race, and differ from race to race : they are relative to time, and vary from time to time.

Good and evil which would be everlasting—it doth not exist. All is in flux. Everything good is the evil of yore which has been rendered serviceable.

The morality of to-day is thus a phase, and nothing more ; and it is a phase to be condemned. This is plain, if we examine first its content, and then its source. The content of its rules shows that they are intended to adapt the individual to the advantage of the community or herd. Truthfulness is praised because it lets the herd know what to expect ; lying is blamed because it leaves the herd in a state of uncomfortable mystification. But is the advantage of the herd, after all, an ultimate criterion ? Morality makes that assumption : is it entitled to its assumption ? All is not necessarily for the best, when

lofty independent spirituality, the will to stand alone, are felt to be dangers ; when everything that elevates the individual above the herd is called evil, and the tolerant, unassuming, self-adapting, self-equalizing disposition attains the moral distinction and honour.

Nor does the source of this morality entitle it to any more respect. The source is alleged to be conscience ; and this conscience professes to condemn actions on the assumption of the free will of their agents and on the ground of the wrong use of that will. The profession and assumptions are baseless. There is no freedom of the will. Heredity and environment are the sources of our acts : what we call free will is really the ‘ complex state of delight ’ of a personality as it issues inevitably in action ; and the supposed free will of the moralist is



really 'the most egregious theological trick . . . for the purpose of making mankind responsible in a theological manner—that is to say, dependent upon theologians'. As we cannot speak of free will, so we cannot speak of conscience. Conscience is not the source of valuations. The herd creates values by an emotion, an emotion of the same aesthetic nature as that of the artist contemplating his work—an emotion of comfortable contentedness with all that is pleasing to its senses. But shall we be foolish enough to accept the aesthetic sense of the herd as the final determinant of our values?

Thus the community or herd creates, on the impulse of a sensuous emotion of contentedness inspired by certain kind of acts and intentions, a herd-morality which assigns moral value to acts and intentions advantageous to the herd. Once created, this morality is imitated: the force of mimicry, so potent in nature, as Nietzsche learned from his biological studies, is equally potent in man. But it is no guarantee of the truth of this morality that it was created by a majority, or that it has lasted through the centuries. The herd is a herd of slaves, contented just to live. But there are masters as well as slaves; and masters are determined not only to have life, but to have it abundantly. For in truth—so Nietzsche held—any real life is not the issue of a mere 'will to live', as Darwin taught; nor does the world show any mere 'struggle for existence', in which those who are fittest just to exist survive the ordeal. Life is the issue of a 'will to power'; and the world shows a struggle for power in which the greatest power wins not only survival but dominance.

Life is a state of opulence, luxuriance, and even absurd prodigality: where there is a struggle, it is a struggle for power. Life is essentially appropria-

tion, injury, conquest of the strange and weak, suppression, severity, obtrusion of its own forms, incorporation, at the least and in its mildest form exploitation. The criterion of truth lies in the enhancement of the feeling of power.

That then is true which enables me to expand in the full opulence of power : that is good which contributes to the unfolding of my power in the full blossom of action. Power is of the few, ultimately perhaps of the one, the Caesar or Napoleon ; and since power is the standard, it is therefore the few whose truth is the *vraie vérité des choses*, and whose morality is the true morality. Herd-morality, slave-morality, is untrue and immoral—untrue, that is to say, and immoral, if one seeks to apply or enforce it among masters, but true enough and moral enough for the slave. Let the slave demand and cultivate truth and pity—for himself and for his like. Truth and pity are the conditions of living—of bare living : and since that is all the slave can expect, truth and pity are his *métier*. They are not the *métier* of the master. What he expects and demands is power ; and power can only be attained in war ; and in war all things are fair,<sup>1</sup> and pity is misplaced.

There were preachers of power before Nietzsche. In the *Gorgias* of Plato Callicles already expounds the doctrine of herd-morality and master-morality. Convention, says Callicles, is one thing : nature is another. Convention is made by the majority or herd, who are weaklings and slaves ; ‘and they make laws and distribute praises and censures with a view to themselves and their own interests.’ But ‘nature herself intimates

<sup>1</sup> ‘It matters greatly to what end one lies, whether one preserves or destroys by means of falsehood.’

that it is just for the better to have more than the worse, the more powerful than the weaker ' ; and ' a man who had sufficient force would trample under foot all formulas and spells and charms ', rising in the strength of his power and asserting the just right of his might. Let him who would see sophistry of this sort blown to the winds turn to his Plato ; for Callicles is just Nietzsche, and Nietzsche is just Callicles. But he is a Callicles with some twenty-three added centuries of experience ; and it is worth while to see how, not in its essence but in its trappings and adornments, the doctrine has grown in all these years.

There are for Nietzsche, as for Callicles, two moralities, each for its appointed class—the slave-morality based on the calculus of general advantage or the greatest happiness of the greatest number, and the master-morality founded on the rock of power. Of the two the latter is ultimate and absolute ; the former has only relative truth. This herd-morality, this slave-morality, is the morality of democracy and of Socialism : it is also the morality of Christianity. Democracy, Socialism, Christianity, all stand for the advantage of the weak. They are all anarchical, for they all contravene the just hierarchy of nature, whereby the strong rules the weak ; and they all encourage a temper of unstable sentimentality at the expense of disciplined power. Especially does Nietzsche denounce Christianity. It defeats the operations of natural selection : ' Christian altruism is the mob egotism of the weak.' It is a religion of maudlin pity, which preserves the botched, the weak, the degenerate. It is the religion of the infirmary ; and yet again it is the religion of Anarchy, because its object is destruction and the pulling down of the mighty from their seats. Not the dogma but the morality of Christianity is the

object of Nietzsche's attack ; and it is not our Lord, but St. Paul, whom he regards as the founder of this morality. St. Paul was the standard-bearer in a revolt of the decadents. He began the work of destroying the fruits of 'the will to the future of mankind, the great Yea to all things, which was materialized in the *imperium Romanum*' ; and henceforth a legion of 'crafty, stealthy, invisible, anaemic vampires'—St. Augustine for instance—continued his work of destruction. 'St. Paul was a slave-mind . . . with a bad conscience and a thirst for power' (though Nietzsche, by the way, has already denied the existence of conscience and deified the thirst for power) ;

and Paul, this appalling impostor, pandered to the instincts of Chandala (or Slave) morality in those paltry people when he said : Not many mighty, not many noble are called, but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.

So through Paul came to pass the revolt of decadence, and the turning of the world into an infirmary peopled by anaemic ascetics, who 'succeeded in transforming Eros and Aphrodite—sublime powers, capable of idealization—into hellish genii and phantom goblins'.

Nietzsche seeks to destroy Christian destruction, and to return to a healthy paganism in which there shall be the drunk delight of battle with peers on ringing windy plains. Not peace, but a sword wielded by the will to power—that is the true way of the world.

Horribly clangs its silvery bow ; and although it comes like the night, war is nevertheless Apollo, the true divinity for consecrating and purifying states. . . . National consumption, as well as individual, admits of a brutal cure. . . . Let the little schoolgirls say : 'To be good is sweet and touching.' Ye say, a good cause will hallow even war ? I say unto you : a good war hallows every cause. War and courage have done greater

things than love of your neighbour.<sup>1</sup> . . . Against the deviation of the State-ideal into a money-ideal the only remedy is war, and once again war, in the emotions of which this at any rate becomes clear, that in love to fatherland and prince the State produces an ethical impulse indicative of a much higher destiny.

Passages such as these would seem to indicate an aggressive and militant nationalism. But Nietzsche is not consistent; and nationalism, as has already been said, is one of his many *bêtes noires*. His constructive ideal is not national, and the war he would preach is not an ordinary battle of the nations. What he seeks is the gradual evolution of the type of man upwards and onwards to the superman. What he desires is an evolution working not through the will to live, but through the will to power, and not blindly, but under the direction of man's progressive intelligence. He would have the strong and vigorous to sort themselves out by struggle, to train themselves for further struggle, and to produce children who should at once inherit<sup>2</sup>, continue, and improve that training, in order that finally, through successive improvements of the stock, a super-species should arise. His ideal may be said to be a sort of combination of Comte and Galton, of Positivism and Eugenics. Like the Positivist, he would abandon theology, and seek a goal in manhood, here on earth; like the Eugenist, he would create the manhood by pure breeding.

Let your will say: the superman shall be the meaning of the earth. I conjure you, my brethren, remain true to the earth, and believe not those who speak to you of hopes beyond the earth. I love him who liveth

<sup>1</sup> This passage is inscribed on the title-page of Bernhardt's *Deutschland und der nächste Krieg*.

<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche seems to have believed in the inheritance of acquired characteristics.



in order to know, and seeketh to know in order that hereafter the superman may live. I love him who laboureth and investeth that he may build the house for the superman.

At first Nietzsche seems to have thought of the superman as a single individual: he repeatedly speaks of Napoleon. Gradually, however, superman passed into super-species. Of the evolution there were apparently to be three stages: first, an aristocracy to rule all Europe: next, a new European race of 'higher men'; and finally, the race of supermen. It is significant that Nietzsche dreams of a united Europe, or a United States of Europe. Nationalism, in his later years, he abandoned. 'Is there a single idea behind this bovine nationalism?' 'We are not nearly German enough to advocate nationalism and race-hatred.' He emphasizes the unity of European culture, and the coming unity of European economies; he looks to the day when men shall be called in honour Good Europeans, 'the heirs of Europe, the rich, overwealthy heirs, the heirs, only too deeply-pledged, of millennia of European thought.' Already, he feels, in the nineteenth century itself the profoundest spirits have been seeking to anticipate the good European of the future, and they have only fallen back into patriotism when their wings flagged from carrying them further. Of such stuff were Napoleon and Goethe, Beethoven and Heine—men who transcended nationality and transcended the State, 'that coldest of monsters and most frigid of liars', which pretends to be the People, and by the People is detested.

Meanwhile this generation must travail for the future.

Talk not of 'land of my fathers': our bark must steer for the land of our children. Oh my brothers, I consecrate and lead you to a new nobility; ye shall

be to me begetters and trainers and sowers of the future.

In this duty of preparation for the superman the old egoism seems forgotten, or at any rate transmuted into a grave and austere altruism. True, the superman who is to come is a lover of power and not of contentment, of war and not of peace ; true, they from whose loins he shall come must be of like substance. And yet the sacrifice remains. This generation shall not see the superman, but it must surrender itself to his production. That production thus becomes as it were a categorical imperative, and indeed a religion. The will to power abides ; but it is the will to power as it will be embodied in the future race, and not the will to power as it lives in the men of to-day. The men of to-day must possess their souls in rigorous patience, not expanding in opulence, but contracting themselves to a rigid austerity of self-discipline and training. Here Nietzsche turns to Eugenics, and preaches the need of legislation for the race rather than for the individual ; for the future rather than for the present. He turns too to education, not of the masses but of the few men picked for great and lasting work—the aristocracy of good Europeans, the higher men, who shall be bridges to the supermen—men self-disciplined, obedient, faithful ; men of a good courage and a burning hope. So shall heroism (*Heldentum*) come back into honour, and an age shall arise ‘ which will carry heroism into knowledge and wage war for the sake of ideas and their consequences ’—a phrase in which one seems to detect in advance the idea of the culture-war intended to disseminate higher culture among less cultured nations.

It would be difficult to prove that Nietzsche’s doctrine is consistent. His books are a chaos of separate aphor-

isms and aperçus ; and he can at once denounce the State and hold that in war it produces a great ethical impulse—at once laud the will to power, and extol a Spartan self-discipline. His dream of the United States of Europe, and of mankind perfected by Eugenics, may attract, and rightly attract, many noble souls. He did not pander to that exclusive and jealous nationalism which has consumed modern Germany—‘ that national heart-itch and blood-poisoning ’ which he detested. But as Luther once said, ‘ the Word goes into the ordinary man excellent, and comes out of him fleshly.’ *Quicquid recipitur secundum modum recipientis recipitur.* Now Nietzsche, neglected in his lifetime, has been held in great honour since his death ; and tens of thousands of his books have been sold in Germany.<sup>1</sup> He has been ‘ received ’ ; and it is difficult to believe that he has not been received according to the temper of modern Germany. Anti-nationalist himself, he has nevertheless ministered, by his gospel of power, to the national instinct for subdual. The Germans have felt, no doubt vaguely and almost unconsciously, that they are the European aristocracy, destined to ‘ carry heroism into knowledge and to wage war for the sake of ideas ’. Their militarism has drawn new encouragement from a praise of struggle which has indeed nothing to do with the mere soldiers’ battle, but which easily slips into a fleshly interpretation. It is quite natural that Bernhardi should quote Nietzsche by name ; and indeed much of Bernhardi is simply Nietzsche transcribed. Take for instance these sayings : ‘ Without war, inferior or demoralized races would only too easily swamp the healthy and vital ones, and a general decadence would

<sup>1</sup> The writer’s copy of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, dated 1906, bears the imprint, ‘ 58th to 61st Thousand ’

be the result. War is one of the essential factors of morality.' So has Nietzsche ministered to that which he despised.

Finally, he has helped to swell the contempt and hatred of England which, if one may judge from much recent German literature, is almost a national passion. That 'nation of consummate cant', that 'fundamentally mediocre species', that 'herd of drunkards and rakes', in which slave-morality has reached its zenith, infallibly attracted on its thick head the lightnings of Nietzsche's indignation—as it also attracted on its cunning and diabolical policy the thunders of Treitschke.

### III

Treitschke was already a professor of history in Berlin while Nietzsche was a professor of philology at Bâle. Unlike Nietzsche, who was unknown to his own generation, Treitschke had great and abounding vogue during the twenty-two years, from 1874 to 1896, in which he lectured at Berlin. The German professor has always been more closely in contact with affairs of State than the teachers of our English Universities, probably because German Universities are themselves more closely in contact with the State, and probably because learning carries more weight and exerts more influence in Germany than it does in England. German professors of law, like Savigny and Gierke, have left a deep mark on the history of German law, and German professors of history, like Dahlmann and Treitschke, have left a deep mark on the history of German politics. None of them has left a deeper mark than Treitschke. His lectures at Berlin were attended by soldiers and by administrators as well as by students; and the version of German history and the interpretation of political

theory which he taught are living and moulding forces to the present day.

In a country like Germany, with a new Empire not yet irrefragably grounded, and with lines of division still present to separate the Prussians of the north from the Bavarians and other Germans of the south, it is natural that the interpretation of past history should be influenced by, and should in turn be used to influence, the politics of the present. In what is called the Prussian School of History this blending of politics and history is most remarkable. Droysen writes a *History of Prussian Policy* to laud and magnify Prussia; Sybel writes the story of *The Foundation of the German Empire* to justify the ways of Bismarck; Treitschke, greatest of all, ~~writes his *German History* to point the moral that Prussia is the chosen nation of Germany.~~ Thus he has served, in the national politics of Germany, to aid the movement towards Prussianization. He would indeed have preferred to see the incorporation of all Germany in Prussia as a single unitary State in 1870, rather than witness, as he had to do, the institution of a federal Empire. But he consoled himself by thinking and teaching that the Empire was in reality only a greater Prussia, and that, federal as it might seem, it was essentially a unitary State under the King of Prussia in his capacity of Emperor; and he did what in him lay to make his teaching true.

It is in the external politics of Germany, and in her policy in Europe, that the most striking side of Treitschke's influence is to be seen. Here his *Politik* is the crucial book. The *Politik* consists of two volumes based on the notes of the lectures delivered by Treitschke at Berlin, from 1874 onwards, on the science of politics.



Its central tenet and cardinal principle may be summarized in four words: 'the State is Power'. And if we should attempt to descry in advance the bearing of these words, it may be seen in another pithy phrase: 'war is politics *par excellence*'. The cult of power and the praise of war are as much articles of faith with Treitschke as they are with Nietzsche; but the power is the power of Prussia, and the war is the war of Prussia. And then, despite some fundamental similarities, Treitschke had no love for Nietzsche. Nietzsche's 'good European' is a bad Prussian; his 'will to power' is an individual will, and the only power that Treitschke tolerates is the power of the collective national State.

Nationalism, which Nietzsche condemned, is the starting-point and goal of Treitschke. His fundamental postulate may be simply stated. The German nation is and must be supreme and only sovereign of its destinies, and must freely and for itself determine its place in the world. 'Agreed,' most of us will instantly answer. Perhaps we shall not agree so readily if we realize what 'sovereignty' and 'place in the world' really mean. Sovereignty, we shall find, means practical immunity from international obligation; place in the world, we shall find, means nothing fixed or determinate, but all that the sword can carve.

The State is power, says Treitschke, as Machiavelli had said before. It is power, because its highest duty is its self-preservation, and the primary means of its self-preservation is power. But even so, power after all is not an end, but only a means; and it will only be justified if the end is just. Now that end is the preservation of the State. Is the preservation of the State, then, an end so absolute as to justify absolute

power? To Treitschke the question only admits of an affirmative answer. But why should the preservation of the State be an end so absolute as to justify absolute power? Because, Treitschke answers, the State is the home and the organ of culture. Now this answer raises difficulties. In the first place, if the fundamental cause of the existence and preservation of the State is culture, then the essential attribute of the State is not power but culture: and the State should be defined not as power, but as the organ of culture, which only uses power as a means to culture, and so far as it is such a means. In the second place, this culture needs definition. Is it something exclusive, something *sui generis*, something absolutely peculiar to each particular State? If that be assumed, some question may arise of the relative values of the different cultures of different States, and it may be asked whether each and every culture of each and every State is equally valuable and equally final. Or again, is culture something general, something common, something to which all States contribute and in which all States share? If that be assumed, some question may arise of the need of common action to preserve such common culture, and it may be asked whether such common action, issuing, let us suppose, in a Concert of Europe and a public law of Europe, does not involve some limitation on the absolute and exclusive sovereignty and self-sufficiency of the State.

The assumption which Treitschke makes, and which the Germans generally seem to make, is that the 'culture' of which they love to speak is exclusive, *sui generis*, peculiar to their State. The real hypothesis of all their reasoning is an exclusive nationalism. We read of *Deutsche Treue*, *Deutsche Tapferkeit*, *Deutsche Kultur*, until we begin to realize that the German mind

---

lives in an exclusively German world of its own. The wind of the spirit, that blows freely through Europe, stops at the Rhine, and a new wind of the German spirit takes its place. East of the Rhine, everything must bear the German print; the vocabulary must be pure German and only German; the very commodities must be German and only German. Now this exclusive national culture of Germany is assumed to be a thing final and ultimate, of final and absolute value; and therefore the State which sustains it is equally final and equally ultimate.

The State is the highest thing in the external society of man; above it there is nothing at all in the history of the world.

This once assumed, its self-preservation, and to that end its power, become imperative.

To care for its power is the highest moral duty of the State. Of all political weaknesses that of feebleness is the most abominable and despicable: it is the sin against the Holy Spirit of politics.

This exclusive nationalism is perhaps not natural to the German; and that may explain why it is so truculently inculcated by Treitschke. In the face of 'particularism', into which the Southern German falls, in the face of cosmopolitanism, for which the assimilative German has a natural instinct, and which some of its greatest thinkers have preached, the Prussian cult (for it is fundamentally Prussian) naturally runs to the other extreme. If that extreme only affected the internal conditions of Germany, as it springs from the internal conditions of Germany, it would be a matter of less concern to the world at large. But it affects all Europe; for the conclusions to which it leads are conclusions that go to determine the policy of Germany

towards other States. And exclusive nationalism, expressing itself in the cult of power, issues in an attitude to the comity of Europe which constitutes a menace to international law and a constant threat of aggressive war.

In discussing international law, Treitschke first states, in order to dismiss, what he regards as two extreme and therefore untenable views. One is the Machiavellian view, which regards the State as mere physical power, able to do whatever it will. This he rejects, because the State is not mere power, but a power with a moral content, which cannot secure its moral ideals internally unless it binds itself by some law externally. The other is the 'Liberal' theory, which 'regards the State as a fine young fellow, who is to be washed and combed and sent to school, and to be thankful and just and God knows what besides'. This theory preaches an imaginary law, laid down *ex cathedra* by professors; but such a law has no sanction and therefore no value, and it would in the last resort demand a Roman pontiff with supreme authority as its executor—a demand which would banish freedom from our beautiful world.

There remains a third view, which Treitschke holds. This view postulates a positive international law, historically developed, which goes on the basis that one must not demand too much from human nature. The foundation of such a law is the principle of give and take, among great States of equal size, which have to live together. That principle demands a system of *great* States, because 'history shows the continuous growth of great States out of decadent small States'—a growth which ends in the great State of adequate size, which is at last ready for peace to protect its existence and its culture. It demands in the second place a system of *equal* States, because no one State should be able to permit itself

to do what it likes without danger to itself. Small States like Belgium and Holland, 'so long the home of international law, to its great loss', are prone to a sentimental view, because they fear aggression; and they demand in the name of humanity concessions at once contrary to the power of the State, unnatural, and unreasonable.

Few people realize to-day how ridiculous it is that Belgium should feel itself the home of international law. A State in an abnormal position must have an abnormal view of international law. Belgium is neutral; it is emasculated (*verstümmelt*); it cannot produce a healthy international law.

On the other hand, over-great States like England have a still worse influence. The overgrown sea-power of England destroys equilibrium at sea. England thus treads international law under her feet; she maltreats neutrals abominably; she insists on a law of war at sea far more inhuman than the law of war on land. Only by building a navy which will produce an equilibrium on the sea can any Power secure humanity and the observance of proper international law.

International law thus represents the rules that result from the equilibrium of great and equal States. But even so it is precarious: it is a law of imperfection. It cannot diminish the sovereignty of the State. 'The State is no violet that blushes unseen: its might must stand out proudly in the light.' When the Ego of its sovereignty is threatened vitally, all bonds are more honoured in the breach than the observance.

It is ridiculous to advise a State which is in competition with other States to start by taking the catechism into its hands.

Not the catechism but the necessity of self-preservation is the canon of its action; and from this canon two results may be deduced. In the



first place, international treaties are no absolute limit, but a voluntary self-limitation, of the State. It has freely restricted itself; it may as freely remove or repudiate the restriction, if there be any vital question of the preservation of itself, its power, and its culture. In the second place, every treaty or obligation of a State must be held to be limited by the proviso *rebus sic stantibus*. 'A State cannot bind its will for the future over against other States'. If historical development changes circumstances, treaties and obligations are *ipso facto* changed and, it may be, nullified. Whether there has been such change is a point which the State itself alone can judge. There is no judge set over the State, and any judgement on this grave issue must be and can only be its own.<sup>1</sup>

The ultimate effect of this doctrine is to leave decision not to the scales of justice, but to the arbitrament of the sword. Let us take, for instance, an international guarantee of the neutrality of a State. We may read in Treitschke that 'if a State is not in a position [if, in

<sup>1</sup> How exclusive nationalism affects a writer's attitude to international law may be seen from Bernhardi:

Each nation evolves its own conception of right, each has its particular ideals and aims, which spring with a certain inevitableness from its character and historical life. Even if a comprehensive international code were drawn up, no self-respecting nation would sacrifice its own conception of right to it. By so doing it would renounce its highest ideals: it would allow its own sense of justice to be violated by an injustice.

Bernhardi's references to Belgium are as curious as those of Treitschke. He uses the proviso *rebus sic stantibus* to raise a doubt whether Belgium is neutral to-day:

When she was proclaimed neutral, no one contemplated that she would lay claim to a large and valuable region of Africa. It may well be asked whether the acquisition of such territory is not *ipso facto* a breach of neutrality.

He adds that 'the conception of permanent neutrality is contrary to the essential nature of the State, which can only attain its highest moral aims in competition with other States'.




other words, it has not a sword of sufficient power] to maintain its neutrality, it is empty words to talk of its neutrality'. To the sword therefore Treitschke turns. Since there is no supreme court of international law, he argues, since history is in a perpetual flux, and historical development makes things stand otherwise than they did, war is justified, and must be conceived as ordained of God.

In 1866 Treitschke thought and said that any dragoon who had struck a Croat down had done more for the cause of Germany than the subtlest head with the best pen. As time went on, this subtle head fell more and more under the glamour of the sword. The German professor lent his pen, as has happened more than once in Germany, to put an ideal interpretation on given facts which in themselves and without such interpretation were somewhat gross; and learning bowed the knee before the soldier as the saviour of culture. Two functions, says Treitschke, belong to the State—the administration of law, and the making of war. It is war that is politics *par excellence*, and war therefore is the great function of the State. It is the great healer; it cannot be thought or wished out of the world, because it is the only medicine for a sick nation. It heals the State by renewing the spirit of membership and of sacrifice. It makes men realize that they are members one of another, and all limbs of one body politic. 'Therein lies the majesty of war, that the petty individual altogether vanishes before the great thought of the State.' And thus 'it is political idealism that involves war'. Nor is war only the sovereign remedy of States; it is also the nurse of the finest virtue of the individual.

What a perversion of morality it were, if one struck heroism out of humanity. . . . But the living God

will see to it that war shall always recur as a terrible medicine for humanity.

This hymn to war carries us back to Nietzsche. But whereas Nietzsche looked to war as a way of evolving a European superman, Treitschke looks to war as the expression of an exclusively national super-nation; and while Nietzsche loved neither nationalism nor militarism, Treitschke is the lover of both. The danger with which his doctrine menaces Europe is simple. An ardently national State, proud of an exclusive culture which it conceives as the highest thing in the world, is released by his teaching from any real obligations to the public law of the European comity of nations, and armed with the sword for the preservation of its own exclusive culture. The fate of Europe seems to depend on the interpretation which Germany will place on the word 'preservation'. It is difficult not to think that that interpretation has been growing wider and wider. The preservation of German culture has come to mean, as far as one can see, not merely the preservation of the German State but the retention within the Germanic fold of all emigrants, and even the ingathering into the German fold of all the separate elements of the German stock. The policy of retention appears in the efforts made to maintain German schools, German speech, German newspapers in countries, like Brazil, in which there is a large German colony; the policy of ingathering appears in the Pan-German attitude to countries like Switzerland and Holland. Pan-Germanism is perhaps a matter of words rather than of actual policy. But even a sober judgment may well fear that this concept of the preservation of an exclusive German culture is a real and driving force—so real that it has become something of a religion. It is perhaps extravagant to feel that the Germans have



tended to a certain attitude of mind like that of early Mohammedanism, an attitude of mind based on the conviction that there is one culture, so precious that it may well be spread by the sword ; and yet one may read in the writings of German savants phrases which make one uneasy. One thinker, for instance, can argue that just as a small State cannot afford a *Dreadnought*, so it cannot build any whole and rounded body of culture. A small State, he feels, must be dependent on the great culture-State for the greater part of its spiritual life, and its incorporation in that greater State will only enrich and invigorate its real vitality.

After all, the conception of power, however defensive it may be in the honest opinion of its votaries, and however much it may be used as the servant of the preservation of the State, tends in the long run, and must tend in the long run, to twist round in their hands and to show its offensive edge. Power cannot be the servant of defence ; power in its nature becomes the master of offence. It is true that Germany has to keep watch and ward on the Rhine and the Vistula ; it is true that there are internal forces of cosmopolitanism and particularism against which she has to guard. It is perhaps also true that the means designed to this end are in danger of becoming themselves the end. German culture may seem a precious thing when it is conceived as standing on the defence against the ' Slav menace ' of the East. It does not seem so precious when it becomes a menace itself ; and that follows inevitably when it betakes itself to power as the means of its defence. Culture, after all, is a thing of the spirit ; by the spirit it grows, and by the spirit it is defended. German culture is not really defended against the Slav by the spirit of power which prohibits the use of the Polish language and expropriates

Polish landowners. Not only is it not defended; it is killed. The culture which allies itself to power ceases to be culture and becomes a mere power.

In the year 416 B.C., Thucydides records, a debate was held between the great State of the Athenians and the inhabitants of a small island called Melos, to whom the Athenians offered the alternative between the sword and submission. 'You know as well as we do,' say the Athenians, 'that right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.' The Melians plead for consideration of what is fair and right. That, they urge, is a common good. 'Surely you are as much concerned in this as any, since your fall would be a signal for the heaviest vengeance, and an example to the world.' 'We feel no uneasiness about the end of our Empire,' answer the Athenians; 'that is a risk we are content to take.' And they reiterate their faith in the necessary law of human nature, by which men rule wherever they can. Thus did Athenian culture become Athenian power, and thus did Athens preach that might was right. Even so to-day does Bernhardt, faithful disciple of Treitschke in his attitude to the 'common good' of international law and to the rights of the strong nation armed, preach the equivalence of power and right. Where a growing nation seeks to conquer new territory, 'might is at once the supreme right, and the dispute as to what is right is decided by the arbitrament of war', which, he adds with a modern refinement, gives 'a biologically just decision'. Marvellous too in his eyes, as in the eyes of the Athenians, is the doctrine 'that the weak nation is to have the same right to live as the powerful and vigorous nation'. Well did Mommsen say to these new Athenians, 'Have a care, gentlemen, lest in this

State, which has been at once a power in arms and in intelligence, the intelligence should vanish, and nothing but the pure military State should remain'.

It is as a great military Power that Germany now stands before the world. She has taken unto herself the ideals of power and might, of massivity and grandiosity. It is colossal ; it is not culture. What we may hope, and hope earnestly and in anguish, is that she will return to worship with her heart the culture to which she pays abundant service of the lips ; that she will enter again into the comity of European States, by sacrificing the false ideal of an exclusive culture guarded by the sword, which in its nature cannot guard it, to the true ideal of a common culture guarded by the Spirit, which alone can kill and make alive ; and that she will again be a king's daughter all glorious within, as she was in those days when, disunited and devoid of ' power ', she gave of her spirit to Europe great music, great poetry, and great philosophy. Thus may she shed that curious paganism, which sees in ' heroism ' the cardinal virtue, and finds heroism only in war ; thus may she return from Nietzsche's ' will to power ' to Luther's justification by faith—from Treitschke's praise of war to Kant's vision of permanent peace.

E. B.

OXFORD,

*September 23, 1914.*

# OXFORD PAMPHLETS

## 1914

---

Crown 8vo. Separately, in paper covers. Also in series as numbered (I-VII), stiff covers, One Shilling net each series. 35 Pamphlets have now (25 November) been issued and others are in preparation. The historical pieces are illustrated by sketch-maps

---

### I

#### 1. The Deeper Causes of the War.

By W. SANDAY. 3d. net. *Fifth Impression.*

The psychology of Prussian militarism ; German public opinion and Germany's aggressive ambitions.

#### 2. To the Christian Scholars of Europe and America: A Reply from Oxford to the German 'Address to Evangelical Christians'. 2d. net. *Fourth Impression.*

The answer of Oxford theologians to a recent manifesto of the German evangelical theologians. This manifesto, which is reproduced in the present pamphlet, argues that Germany is in no sense responsible for the present war. The Oxford reply states that the German theologians cannot have studied either the events which led up to the war or the political utterances of their own countrymen.

#### 3. The Responsibility for the War.

By W. G. S. ADAMS. 2d. net. *Second Impression.*

A brief discussion of the question of responsibility : 1. Austria and Serbia ; 2. The responsibility of Russia ; 3. The intervention of England.

#### 4. Great Britain and Germany.

By SPENSER WILKINSON. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*

Three letters to the *Springfield Republican* : 1. By Prof. Spenser Wilkinson, stating Great Britain's case ; 2. By Prof. John W. Burgess of the University of Columbia, stating Germany's case ; 3. By Prof. Wilkinson, in reply to Prof. Burgess.

#### 5. 'Just for a Scrap of Paper.'

By ARTHUR HASSALL. 1d. net. *Fourth Impression.*

Explains why England stands for the sanctity of European treaty-law.



## II

6. The Germans, their Empire, and how they have made it. By C. R. L. FLETCHER. 2d. net. *Fourth Impression.*  
A historical account of Prussian policy from the seventeenth century.

7. The Germans, their Empire, and what they covet. By C. R. L. FLETCHER. 2d. net. *Fourth Impression.*  
An account of the ambitions avowed by the Pan-German school.

8. Might is Right.

By SIR WALTER RALEIGH. 2d. net. *Second Impression.*  
Why Germany may win; what will happen if she wins; why we believe she will not win.

9. Austrian Policy since 1867.

By MURRAY BEAVEN. 3d. net. *Second Impression.*  
Austrian policy in the Balkans has been of the 'offensive-defensive' order. The Archduke Francis Ferdinand might have saved Austria from rushing to destruction; but 1912 was the beginning of the end.

10. Italian Policy since 1870.

By KEITH FEILING. 2d. net. *Second Impression.*  
Italian policy has been and must be guided by her own interests. The results of her colonial policy have not yet been satisfactory enough to tempt her into adventures.

## III

11. French Policy since 1871.

By F. MORGAN and H. W. C. DAVIS. 2d. net. *Fourth Impression.*  
A historical sketch, discussing the question whether French policy has been aggressive.

12. Russia: The Psychology of a Nation.

By PAUL VINOGRADOFF. 1d. net. *Fourth Impression.*  
A reply to the German taunt that Russia is still in a state of barbarism, and is the enemy of European civilization.

13. Serbia and the Serbs.

By SIR VALENTINE CHIROL. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*  
A sketch of Serbian history, which is incidentally an indictment of the policy pursued by Austria-Hungary towards the Serbian kingdom.

14. Germany and 'The Fear of Russia'.

By SIR VALENTINE CHIROL. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*  
Shows that before 1879 Germany preferred Russia as an ally to Austria. The ambition of Germany to establish a protectorate over Turkey has led her to assist Austria in the Balkans and so to challenge Russia.

15. The Eastern Question.

By F. F. URQUHART. 3d. net. *Third Impression.*  
The history of the Balkan nations; their future.

## IV

### 16. War against War.

By A. D. LINDSAY. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*

Denies that war is good in itself, or a necessary evil. Power is not the sole or chief end for which the State exists. National greatness, if founded on brute force, cannot endure. International law represents an ideal, but an ideal that may be realized.

### 17. The Value of Small States.

By H. A. L. FISHER. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*

The author argues that the debt of civilization to small states is incalculable. They are useful, at the present time, as laboratories of political experiments and as buffer-states between the greater powers.

### 18. How can War ever be Right?

By GILBERT MURRAY. 2d. net. *Fourth Impression.*

A well-known lover of peace and advocate of pacific policies argues against the Tolstoyan position. Right and honour compelled Britain to make war; and war—like tragedy—is not pure evil.

### 19. The National Principle and the War.

By RAMSAY MUIR. 3d. net. *Second Impression.*

Considers the principle of nationality and its application to the settlement of Europe—particularly of S.E. Europe—after the War.

### 20. Nietzsche and Treitschke: The Worship of Power in Modern Germany.

By E. BARKER. 2d. net. *Fourth Impression.*

An explanation of the main points of interest in the ethical and political doctrines of the German ruling classes.

## V

### 21. The British Dominions and the War.

By H. E. EGERTON. 2d. net. *Second Impression.*

Explains the ideas for which the British Empire stands, and the political and moral issues of the war affecting the Dominions.

### 22. India and the War.

By SIR ERNEST TREVELYAN. 1d. net. *Third Impression.*

Discusses the reasons which account for the striking manifestations of Indian loyalty.

### 23. Is the British Empire the Result of Wholesale Robbery?

By H. E. EGERTON. 2d. net.

A historical sketch in answer to a common taunt.

### 24. The Law of Nations and the War.

By A. PEARCE HIGGINS. 2d. net. *Second Impression.*

The violation of Belgian neutrality and the conduct of England to Denmark in 1807; the doctrine of German lawyers that military necessity overrides the laws of war; the balance of power and the sanctity of treaties.

### 25. England's Mission.

By W. BENETT. 2d. net

Answers the question, In what cause are we fighting?

## VI

### 26. August, 1914: The Coming of the War.

By SPENSER WILKINSON. Stiff covers. 1s. net.

## VII

### 27. The Retreat from Mons.

By H. W. C. DAVIS. 3d. net. *Third Impression.*

### 28. The Battles of the Marne and Aisne.

By H. W. C. DAVIS. 4d. net.

The Dispatches, with commentary, maps, &c.

### 29. The Navy and the War.

By J. R. THURSFIELD. 3d. net. *Second Impression.*

Estimates the military and economic value of the silent pressure exercised by our fleet, and warns the faint-hearted and the captious of the perils of lack of faith.

### 30. Bacilli and Bullets.

By Sir WILLIAM OSLER. 1d. net. *Fourth Impression.*

Calls attention to the fact that disease kills more men than the bullet. The most dangerous diseases are preventable by inoculation.

*Published separately and will also appear shortly  
in series.*

### The Double Alliance *versus* The Triple Entente.

By JAMES M. BECK. 3d. net.

The judgement of a well-known American lawyer.

### Thoughts on the War. By GILBERT MURRAY. 2d. net.

An article written in August and now reprinted.

### The Leading Ideas of British Policy.

By GERARD COLLIER. 2d. net.

Examines the political genius of England.

### Greek Policy since 1882. By A. J. TOYNBEE. 4d. net.

### Poland, Prussia, and Culture.

By LUDWIK EHRLICH. 3d. net.

The author is a Doctor of the University of Lwow (Lemberg) in Galicia.

### The Germans in Africa. By EVANS LEWIN. 3d. net.

### What Europe owes to Belgium.

By H. W. C. DAVIS. *In the press.*

*Spectator* :—‘These little books are easily the best books of the war—accurate, quietly written, full of knowledge, and quite unspoiled by vainglory or bitterness.’

*Others in preparation.*

HUMPHREY MILFORD

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, AMEN CORNER, LONDON, E.C.

No. 17

OXFORD PAMPHLETS  
1914

---

THE VALUE OF  
SMALL STATES

---

BY

H. A. L. FISHER, F.B.A.

VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

---

FOURTH IMPRESSION

*Price Twopence net*

---

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

HUMPHREY MILFORD

LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW

NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE BOMBAY

*When I first heard from Stewart of the Courier that Buonoparte had declared that the interests of small states must always succumb to great ones, I said, "Thank God! he has sealed his fate: from this moment his fall is certain."*—S. T. COLERIDGE.

## THE VALUE OF SMALL STATES

UPON the old controversy between Brutus and Caesar the last two generations in Germany have had no difficulty in coming to a decision. The republic is decidedly out of fashion, and with it the whole fabric of idealism upon which in 1848 republican conclusions were wont to be erected. The modern German is all for Caesarism, for a big state, a big army, a big navy, and for a long course of progressive national expansion under the dazzling guidance of the Hohenzollern house. Of the old gentle cosmopolitan feeling, which suffused the literature of the classical period, there is now not a trace surviving. *Weltbürgertum* has given place to the *Nationalstaat*, just as the delicate melodies of Mozart have been succeeded by the obstreperous and clashing brilliance of Strauss. The eloquence of Schiller is still popular, but the sentiment which inspired such a piece as the *History of the Revolt of the United Netherlands* is as dead in Germany as Kant's famous dream of Universal Peace. Realism is the fetish of the hour. Politics must be real or they are despised as shadows; and when a German speaks of *Realpolitik* he means a policy based on material interests, supported by brute force and liberated from the trammels of the moral conscience.

It is not surprising that the triumphs of German Caesarism in the world of fact and idea have led to a very general disparagement of the value and utility of small states. The argument may be gathered from



the pages of Treitschke or indeed from any of the numerous journalists who have drawn their political sustenance from that bitter and uncompromising apostle of imperial methods. It runs very much as follows. In a small state civic life must necessarily be petty, humble, unambitious. The game of politics must centre round small issues, and thus circumscribed in scope, loses the ethical value of scale. Great affairs envisaged on a large horizon have a power of stirring the passionate and imaginative elements in man, which are apt, save in the rarer cases, to respond to stimuli in proportion to their magnitude. Existence in a small state may be elegant, charming, idyllic, compatible with the production of literature and art, but it can never be swept by the great passions which move the world. A small state may create among its members a mild humdrum kind of affection for its history and institutions, but can never be a source of that triumphant pride and hope which lifts citizenship up to the plane of heroism. In a sense it may be said that the history of small states is wound up. They may linger on, preserved by the mutual jealousies of rival Powers or because it is worth nobody's while to attack them, but their bodies will be starved and anaemic and their souls mere echoes of the great movements of mind and emotion which are liberated, almost automatically, by the diurnal movement in great and powerful nations of the social and political machine. Sooner or later the small states will go. They will be absorbed in larger political aggregates. They will follow the line of historical development which has created the large modern states of Europe out of a mosaic of tiny and warring fiefs. And nobody will regret their demise, least of all the citizens themselves.

Indeed, from the point of view of peoples like the Belgians or the Dutch, the moment of inevitable absorption cannot be too rapidly hastened. Only then will they be compelled to discard trifles and to 'think imperially' of serious things. Their geography, political and intellectual, will be enlarged. The art of war will be earnestly practised. The spectator will suddenly become an actor. Great tides of national passion and aspiration will sweep into the tiny state, chasing away impurities, like the majestic ocean suddenly admitted in overwhelming might into a network of landlocked and stagnant pools.

The disciples of Caesarism will even proceed to contend that patriotism in its fullest sense is only possible to large nations. Great states march on, little states mark time. The movement of the great state is continuous and imposing, and, as in the case of other orderly developments, its future can be forecast with a certain degree of exactitude. Guided by the hand of God, the mighty organs which are the chosen vessels of the highest culture upon earth take up, one after another in due sequence, each item of their sacred and providential programme. Thus we have a long historic process ending in the formation of the Prussian kingdom, succeeded by another process leading to the establishment of the German Empire, and to be followed by a third process in the course of which the German Empire will become a world-power, not only supreme on the continent of Europe but exercising a predominant political influence over the whole surface of the globe. Great states have a destiny of which their citizens are conscious. *Et quasi cursores vitai lampada tradunt.* Men come and go, the seasons wax and wane, but each generation in its own brief allotment of life is sustained

by the consciousness that it works on a providential plan, fulfilling one of the grand and mysterious processes of God for the improvement of the world by the spread of German culture. So did the divines of the Dark Ages applaud the forced conversions of Charlemagne.

Even in matters of technical equipment Destiny is said to have decided in favour of the big battalions. It is freely argued in Germany that a perfect organization of educational machinery is only possible to the opulence and minute articulation of a great nation, for the more powerful the state, the richer will be the fund available for museums, art galleries, and libraries, and the larger the class capable of enjoying them. Great states in fact resemble great businesses which on a given expenditure of capital realize a higher rate of profit than their smaller rivals, command wider markets, and exercise a stronger power in barter and sale.

It is easy to understand how the Germans have arrived at this confident and unqualified conclusion as to the worthlessness of small states, seeing that their own late arrival into the circle of the Great Powers was due to the long continuance of that *Kleinstaaterei*, that small-state system, which attracts so much hostile fire from the ranks of the Prussian historians. The humiliations suffered by Germany at the hands of Napoleon, the glory of the War of Liberation, which may be called the first common act of the German people, the fatal relapse into the old system of loose impotent federation, and finally the foundation of the German Empire under Prussian hegemony—these sharply contrasted periods of national history all point to the same lesson, the paralysis bred of disunion and the power generated by unity.

Even now the disciplinarian conscience of Prussia

judges that the unity of Germany is all too imperfectly achieved. There are the separate states, there are the suppressed nationalities, there are the active and contentious political parties whose struggles impair the majesty of the Reichstag, and whose criticism weakens and perplexes the direction of imperial policy. When the Social Democrats, or the Poles, or the Catholics of the Centre embarrass the Government, good German imperialists look with envy at the social and religious cohesion of Great Britain. There is then no ground for wonder if, to the patriotic German of modern times, a contracted spirit of localism, only to be eradicated by a strenuous effort of the national will, seems to be the principal flaw in the political character of the German race, as it has undoubtedly been the chief source of German political impotence in the past. And we can easily see how Germans, realizing the evils of past disunion, and exercising that tendency to generalize which is inveterate in the Teutonic intelligence, come to the conclusion that the happiness and advance of mankind are bound up in the expansion of great states and in the disappearance of small ones.

It must be confessed that this general attitude is affected by considerations of a different order. Outside the limits of the German Empire lies a *Germania irredenta*, a line of small states inhabited in whole or part by men of German stock and once included in the imperial orbit.

‘Of the territory’, writes Dr. Rohrbach, ‘which belonged to the German Empire five hundred years ago and was inhabited by men of German stock, more than a third has been abstracted from modern Germany—the German lands of Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland. If you add in the Livonian

territories from the Memel to the Gulf of Finland, where it is true the mass of the peasantry was not German, but where the townsfolk and the knights were German and the princes and nobility members of the Holy Roman Empire, then modern Germany is only half the size of Germany at the end of the Middle Ages. We leave out of our consideration those territories which at the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century were only bound to the Empire by a loose connexion and belonged naturally to France and Italy, like the Free County of Burgundy, the duchies of Savoy, Milan, Mantua, Verona, and confine ourselves in the first place to territories inhabited by ancient German settlements, and secondly to the Slavonic lands of the East which were comprised in the German colonizing movement. To these Bohemia at that time belonged, for its penetration by German influence was only checked by the counter reformation. It was not till about 1400 that the Kingdom of Poland pushed the German frontier further west. Posen and a piece of West Prussia and Schleswig, though not entirely inhabited by Germans, constitute the only territorial gain which the modern German Empire has to show in comparison with the old Empire. But what are these gains in comparison with the losses! The ring of territories encircling modern Germany, inhabited by more than 20,000,000 men of German stock, politically and even in national sentiment estranged from German thought.'

To a person imbued with a belief in the historical mission of Germany this contraction of the imperial orbit, so accurately described by Dr. Rohrbach, is one of those disagreeable facts only to be fitted into a rational scheme of the Universe if they are destined to be speedily reversed. Sooner or later Providence must intend that the broken unity of the mediaeval German Empire should be reunited to the parent stock. And



so the argument descends from the high plateau of general ideas to the low ground of political appetite which is watered by the streams of national memory.

In view of this interpretation it is pertinent to ask what the world has gained from small states in the past, how far they justify their existence in the present, and whether they are likely to perform any valuable function in the economy of the future.

Almost everything which is most precious in our civilization has come from small states, the Old Testament, the Homeric poems, the Attic and the Elizabethan drama, the art of the Italian Renaissance, the common law of England. Nobody needs to be told what humanity owes to Athens, Florence, Geneva, or Weimar. The world's debt to any one of these small states far exceeds all that has issued from the militant monarchies of Louis XIV, of Napoleon, of the present Emperor of Germany. It may, perhaps, be objected that the apparition of artistic, literary, or scientific genius is an incalculable matter of hazard unaffected by the size of the political community in which the great man happens to be born, and that we are only entitled to infer from these examples that a small state may provide an atmosphere in which genius may thrive. It is, however, a relevant answer to much of the criticism now levelled in Germany against small states, to remind ourselves that in the particular points of heroic and martial patriotism, civic pride and political prudence, they have often reached the highest levels to which it is possible for humanity to attain, and that from Thucydides, Plato, and Aristotle, as well as from the illustrious school of Florentine historians and publicists, the world has learnt nine-tenths of its best political wisdom. America has particular reasons for gratefully



recognizing one of the smallest and most illustrious of the city states of Europe. The seed of modern democratic theory was sown in Geneva, and being scattered on the hither shore of the North American continent by small communities, organized on the model of Calvin, burgeoned into the great Republic of the West.

Nor is it fanciful, in estimating the causes which contributed to the peculiar brilliance first of the Greek and then of the Italian city state, to attribute some weight to the question of size. Indeed, if we do this, we shall only be echoing the voice of antiquity itself. In the famous passage in which he depicts the lineaments of the ideal state, Aristotle gives the opinion that a city so large that its citizens are unable to hear the voice of a single town-crier has passed the limits of wholesome growth. This conclusion was based on the view that every citizen must take a direct part in the political deliberations of the state to which he belongs. Indeed, had the states of antiquity exceeded the limits compatible with direct government, the world would have lost a good part of its political education. As it was, the contracted span of these communities carried with it three conspicuous benefits. The city state served as a school of patriotic virtue, not in the main of the blustering and thrasonical type, but refined and sublimated by every grace of instinct and reason. It further enabled the experiment of a free direct democratic government to be made, with incalculable consequences for the political thinking of the world. Finally, it threw into a forced and fruitful communion minds of the most different temper, giving to them an elasticity and many-sidedness which might otherwise have been wanting or less conspicuous, and stimulating, through the close mutual competition which it engendered, an

intensity of intellectual and artistic passion which has been the wonder of all succeeding generations and such as can never be reached in great states organized for the vulgarity of aggressive war.

So much at least will be generally conceded. The question for us, however, is not to assess our debt to the city states of the past, but to consider what arguments may be found for safeguarding the existence of the smaller nation states of the modern world. And first of all it is relevant to ask whether there may not be some advantage to humanity at large arising from the fact that certain communities are withdrawn by reason of the scale from the competition of armaments. To certain military minds in Germany it seems to be a lamentable thing that any community of human beings should be organized on a basis of peace, or that the policy of any Government should be steadily directed towards the preservation of its subjects from the horrors of war. Let us assume for a moment that this extravagant proposition is true, and that the Swiss, the Danes, the Dutch, and the Belgians would be greatly improved in their general morality if they were thrown into some big military empire with an aggressive world-policy and a Providential destiny to impose its culture on the world, and all the other familiar paraphernalia of the Potsdam philosophy. We have still to ask ourselves the question whether, even from the selfish point of view of the Great Powers who are blessed with the moral luxury of a conscript army, there may not be some convenience attaching to the continued existence of small oases of peace in a world nervously equipping itself for Armageddon? Has Italy no cause to be grateful to the Swiss Confederation? Would the Scandinavian kingdoms preserve their unruffled

neutrality if the Danish peninsula were swallowed up by Germany ? And has the disappearance of Poland really benefited the two greatest partitioning Powers whose past appetites have brought them the heritage of restless anxiety which belongs to the vigil of coterminous states ? Indeed it is not easy to measure the injurious consequences which have grown from the disappearance of that middle kingdom of Lotharingia which once served as a buffer between France and Germany, or from the extinction of the Polish nation at the close of the eighteenth century. By common confession European diplomacy suffers from nerves ; and the nervous tension is necessarily increased with every addition to the ranks of the rivals. The entanglements likely to give rise to conflict are proportionate to the number and weight of the Powers which stand inside the ring. Every ally who joins one or other of the coalitions brings with him a whole cluster of new interests which the coalition is bound to defend, and thereby increases the chance of war. Every Power which stands aside lessens the general strain and contracts the area of inflammable controversy.

But the advantages to be derived from the existence of small buffer states are subject to the clear condition that their independence and neutrality are respected. Let us consider for a moment what the world would have gained if the German Emperor and his advisers had all along regarded the violation of Belgian neutrality as an unthinkable crime. Not only would Great Britain be now at peace, but no general European war would have taken place at all. The challenge to Russia was thrown down by Germany because it was calculated in Berlin that by marching through Belgium the Germans could easily crush France before the

Russian peril became insistent. It is absurd to speak of the violation of Belgian neutrality as a 'bitter necessity' forced upon a reluctant country in an unforeseen emergency. It was, on the contrary, the deliberate groundwork for a careful edifice of aggressive diplomacy. The entire plan of the campaign against France was framed on the supposition that the Germans would march through Belgium. The whole scheme of operations against Russia was based on the belief that the total weight of the German military power could be thrown on the eastern frontier by reason of the rapid and crushing success which a German army, advancing through the Belgian gateway, would be able to achieve in France. And upon these two military calculations the ambitious edifice of German world-policy was built. All the plans of the General Staff were secretly framed on the supposition that Belgium would be treated as part of the German Empire in the event of war. It was with this prospect in view that Germany thought it safe to defy Russia in 1909 and to repeat the defiance in 1914. And though it would be difficult to set bounds to the military presumption of Germany, it may be safely assumed that if the Belgian doorway had been patently barred, the diplomacy of the German Empire would have been tuned to a more modest key. The moral of all this is clear enough. The small states should not be abolished: on the contrary, their neutrality should be supported by a guarantee so formidable that the strongest Power would never be tempted in future to infringe it.

We may test the value of these communities by another criterion. The Hague Tribunal has been the object of much silly depreciation, and the military parties in the world are never tired of giving voice to the contempt

in which they involve the whole principle of arbitration. It is true that the belief in the value of pacific solutions chiefly flourishes in small unmilitary states like Holland or in that large and imposing aggregate of small civilian states which goes by the name of the United States of America. And it is equally true that no nation has yet consented or, in the present state of public ethics, is likely to consent to refer matters affecting its 'vital interests, independence, or honour' to an International Tribunal. Nevertheless a considerable number of arbitration treaties have been concluded agreeing to refer differences to the Hague Tribunal; and in the course of the North Sea incident of 1904 the strained relations between England and Russia were greatly eased by the fact that the Hague Conference had already provided a method of procedure by which the dispute might be adjusted without loss of dignity to either side. Arbitration cannot banish war, but it can diminish the accumulation of minor grievances which, if untended, are apt to create that inflamed state of public opinion out of which wars easily arise; and in the case of larger disputes recourse to arbitration has at least the advantage of gaining time. Now the condition of mind which supports the principle of arbitration, and which provides facilities for recourse to it, is only made possible by the existence of communities organized for peace, and standing outside the armed and vigilant rivalries of the great continental Powers.

It is symptomatic of the Prussian spirit to disparage any manifestation of natural feeling which runs counter to the assumed necessities of a militant Empire; and so in books written even by such eminent and moderate men as Prince von Bülow, the late Chancellor of Germany, we find a fixed intention to suppress, so far as



may be, the national characteristics of the Poles, Danes, and men of Latin race who have been incorporated in the Empire. We in England, who have some experience of minor nationalities, cannot read of the recent developments of Prussian policy in Poland without feeling how unintelligent and oppressive it is, and how much better it would be in the interests of internal peace and consolidation, if Germany would throw her mind into a generous and liberal attitude towards the men of alien type whom she has absorbed by conquest. But it is part of the Prussian genius—if a drillmaster can have genius—to regard all variety, not only as troublesome, which it often may be, but as injurious, which it very seldom is. Indeed, one of the principal arguments in favour of the preservation of the small states of Europe (and the same argument applies to the preservation of the state system in America) lies in the fact that these small communities do vary from the set type which is imprinted by steady and powerful governments upon the life and behaviour of the larger Powers. The mere fact of this variety is an enrichment of human experience and a stimulus to self-criticism and improvement. Indeed, the existence of small states operates in the large and imperfect economy of the European system very much in the same way as the principle of individual liberty operates in any given state, preventing the formation of those massive and deadening weights of conventional opinion which impair the free play of individuality, and affording a corrective to the vulgar idea that the brute force of organized numbers is the only thing which really matters in the world.

The critic of small states may also fairly be asked what he means by the word 'civilization'. If civilization is a phrase denoting the sum of those forces which help to



bind men together in civil association, if it means benevolence, dutifulness, self-sacrifice, a lively interest in the things of the mind, and a discerning taste in the things of the sense, then there is no reason to think that these qualities are the special prerogative of great states. Indeed, there is a certain type of harsh and stoical patriotism which, by reason of its austere and arrogant exclusiveness, is inimical to the growth of civilized feeling. It is not confined to big states, for it was present in ancient Sparta ; nor is it the necessary accompaniment even of huge military monarchies. But it is the spirit of modern Prussia, a spirit consistent indeed with the heroic qualities of the barbarous ages, but lacking the sane and temperate outlook of civilized life. All through history the great enemy of human reason has been fanaticism. And there is no reason to believe that the fanaticism of a military state, served by the most destructive artillery in the world, is any bit less injurious to mankind than the spirit which for many centuries of history condemned the religious heretic to the torments of the stake.

It is difficult rightly to assess the contributions which the smaller states of Europe have made during the past century to the sum of human culture. Nor would a mere list of eminent men such as Ibsen and Maeterlinck, of whom every cultivated person has heard, or Gramme, the Belgian inventor of the dynamo, or Van 't Hoff, the famous Dutch chemist, prove more than the indisputable fact that intellectual life of the highest quality may be carried on in such communities. It is of course possible that, if Holland were forced into the German confederation, Dutch painting, which has now reached a level far higher than any attained in recent years in Germany, would suffer no eclipse, and that the Dutch universities would persevere in their work of scholarly theological

exegesis. It is possible that, under the same conditions, the wonderful perfection to which the little kingdom of Denmark has brought the arts of dairy-farming and agriculture would still be maintained. But it would depend entirely upon the degree of liberty and autonomy which a German emperor might be willing to concede, whether this would be so or not, whether the natural currents of hopeful energy would continue to flow or whether they would be effectually sealed up by the ungenial fiat of an alien taskmaster. Upon this it is unnecessary to speculate. But it is strictly pertinent to the argument to remember that the three small states, whose existence is closely and specially threatened by the expansion of Germany, have each developed not only a peculiar and strongly marked economy, but certain special excellences and qualities such as are most likely to be developed in an atmosphere of comparative tranquillity. Thus, apart from the school of landscape painting, the Dutch have set a model to the world in all that pertains to the scientific classification and management of archives, vanquishing in this particular even the French, whose organization of historical learning is so justly famed. Denmark, too, has its own speciality in a very perfect organism for co-operative production in agriculture.

Indeed, one of the advantages flowing from the existence of smaller states consists in the fact that they serve as convenient laboratories for social experiment—a point likely to be appreciated in America, in view of the great mass of material for the comparative study of social and industrial expedients which is provided by the enterprise of the American State legislatures. Such experiments as women's suffrage, or as the State prohibition of the public sale of alcoholic drink, or as a thoroughgoing

application of the Reformatory theory of punishment, would never be seriously discussed in large, old, and settled communities, were it not for the fact that they have been tried upon a smaller scale by the more adventurous legislatures of the New World. Man is an imitative animal, and a study of such an organ as the *Journal of Comparative Legislation* exhibits the increasing uniformity of the problems which confront the legislator, and the increasing monotony of the solutions which he finds to meet them. All over the world industrial, educational, penal legislation tends to conform to type. And within limits the tendency is the necessary and wholesome consequence of the unifying influence of modern industrial conditions. But our enlarged facilities for imitation present obvious dangers, and among them the fatal temptation to borrow a ready-made uniform which does not fit. Small states may fall into this pitfall as well as big ones, but at least their continued existence presents some guarantee for diversity of life and intellectual adventure in a world steadily becoming more monotonously drab in its outer garment of economic circumstance.

No historical state can be driven out of its identity without suffering a moral impoverishment in the process. The evil is not only apparent in the embitterment and lowering of the citizens of the conquered community, whether they are compelled to the agonies of a Polish dispersion, or linger on nursing their rights and wounded pride in the scene of their former independence, but it creates a problem for the conqueror which may very well harden and brutalize his whole outlook on policy. It is never good for a nation to be driven to the employment of harsh measures against any portion of its subjects.

Upon whatever plausible grounds of immediate expediency such measures may be justified, they invariably harden the tone of political opinion, and create an atmosphere of insensibility which spreads far beyond the sphere of the special case and occasion. The acquisition of Alsace-Lorraine by Germany is a case in point. The result of the forcible incorporation of these provinces in the German Empire has been bad for the governed and equally bad for the governors. Coercion is a virus which cannot be introduced into any part of the body politic without risk of a general diffusion of the poison.

It is no idle fancy to suppose that the kind of policy which the Prussian Government has thought fit to adopt towards the alien nationalities of the German Empire has reacted upon its treatment of those German parties whose views do not accord with the strict official convention. No Conservative English statesman would ever dream of denouncing English socialists as Prince von Bülow denounces the social democrats of Germany. But then no English statesman, Liberal or Conservative, would dream of treating any portion of the British Empire as Prince von Bülow treated the German Poles.

It is impossible accurately to assess the value to a nation of the self-esteem which is the legacy of its history. People who weigh everything in material scales may find nothing worth preserving in the historical consciousness of the small nations of Europe. They will argue that the Dutch, the Belgians, the Danes, the Swiss, might be incorporated in the German Empire not only without pain but with a positive accession of material comfort and wealth, and a larger political outlook in the future.

They will even deny that there need be any

moral impoverishment in an exchange of historical memories, under which the incorporated Dutchman would hook himself on to the German pedigree and count Bismarck and Moltke among his deities, while the Dutch sea-dogs of the heroic age would give their names to the cruisers and submarines of the incorporating Empire. In all such reasoning there is very little allowance for the facts of human nature or for the working of the moral principle in man. As no individual can break violently with his past without a moral lesion, so too the rupture of the historical continuity of a state carries with it an inevitable weakening and abasement of public ideals, which may continue for several generations. We need not labour to establish a principle which is grounded on such obvious facts of individual consciousness. But one historical instance may be adduced in support. When in 1580 Portugal was annexed to Spain, then reputed to be the most formidable empire in the world, she suffered a moral as well as a political eclipse from which she has never since recovered. Her nerve seemed to go and by swift stages she sank into listlessness and decay.

Nowhere is the shaping power of this historical consciousness more evident than in the peasant nations of the Balkan Peninsula. These rude and valiant democracies live upon the memories of the past to an extent of which sophisticated peoples have little notion. The great ballad which commemorates the battle of Kossovo, fought against the Turks more than five hundred years ago, is still one of the most important political influences among the southern Slavs. Nor has the memory of the empire of Stephen Dushan, under whom Serbia was the leading Power in the Balkans, ever been allowed to fade among the Serbs, despite tragedies sufficient to



break the spirit of a less stalwart race. To rob the Serbs of their political independence according to the present plan of the German Powers would be a measure difficult to surpass for cruel and purposeless futility. A race which had succeeded in preserving its historical consciousness through centuries of grinding Turkish tyranny would not be likely to renounce its past or its future under the guns of Austria. And even if the improbable came to pass, and a conquered Serbia were to become an obedient and contented fraction of the Austrian Empire, forgetful of heroic ballads and of a long tradition of hardiness and valour, would there be no loss of moral power in the process? To those who measure all virtues by the standard of civic virtue, by intensity of emotional and practical patriotism, the loss would be beyond dispute. A great incentive to the performance of unselfish action would be destroyed, a source of heroic and congenial activity would disappear never to be replaced. Under the hypothesis the Serbs would sink below the level of their blood kinsmen the Slovaks, who, despite the manifold oppressions of their Hungarian masters, still nurture a flame of protesting nationalism. From such political apostasy no nation could ever expect to make a complete moral recovery.

It may be objected that the whole process of European history is summed up by the absorption of the smaller in the larger states; and that if Hanover is reconciled to absorption there is no reason why Holland, Denmark, and Belgium should lodge a protest in advance against their impending fate. To this contention there is a simple answer. These outlying nations can only be brought into the German fold under compulsion. Their frame of mind is not German, their habits are not



German, their history for the last four centuries has served to multiply points of difference from Germany. They have no desire to submit themselves either to the military or to the financial system of the German Empire. They are not ashamed of their present condition, and are singular enough to hold that human happiness and goodness do not depend upon the size of an army or navy or a budget. It is enough that the citizen of each of these states can call his country his own. Patriotism has nothing whatever to do with spatial extent nor are emotions to be measured by square miles. Great empires are generally full of the variances of unassimilated and discontented men ; and though a country may be weak and small, it may yet be capable of inspiring among its inhabitants the noblest and purest forms of affectionate devotion.

Indeed, the supreme touchstone of efficiency in imperial government lies in its capacity to preserve the small state in the great union. If the British Empire has succeeded in retaining the affections of its scattered members, the result has been due to the wise and easy tolerance which has permitted almost every form of religious, political, and social practice to continue unchecked, however greatly they may vary from the established traditions of the English race. Thus in the Province of Quebec we suffer the existence of a French ultramontane state based on the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, and preserving even to this day many of the social features of a French colony in the age of Louis XIV, a community more extreme in its ecclesiastical rigour than any Roman Catholic state in Europe, and in language, religion, and social habits presenting the sharpest contrast to the English provinces of the Dominion of Canada. The same careful deference

to the pre-existing conditions is shown in every part of our Indian administration, which carries tenderness to the religious scruples of the Mohammedans and Hindoos to a point of delicate solicitude, which no Government in the world has ever before attempted, and only the most practised experience can supply. These, however, are not the methods of the German Empire, nor can they be the methods of any empire which practises a uniform and universal system of military conscription. As soon as the words State and Army become coterminous, a philosophy of violent unification is set up within the body politic, which sooner or later carries everything before it, save the spiritual forces which cannot be broken by any machinery, however despotic and powerful. The Germans have not succeeded in winning either the Poles or the Danes or the Alsatians to their rule, because they have repeated the mistake which England made in Ireland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and which England has never since ceased to lament. They have attempted to manufacture German citizens by violence ; and the history of Alsace-Lorraine under imperial rule has shown how little the policy of violence, however carefully it may be masked by specious political concessions, is availing to change the spiritual allegiance of a people. Indeed the case of Alsace-Lorraine supplies a fair indication of the misfortunes which would ensue upon the compulsory annexation of any one of the small states of Europe by a big military Power. It is not to be imagined that the forced union of these two provinces with Germany has been productive of material injury. On the contrary, they have shared in the expanding industry and commerce of the Empire, and any loss in population due to the emigration of the French has been more than compen-

sated by an influx of Germans. Nevertheless, they have been and continue to be unhappy under the Prussian yoke, Alsace more unhappy than Lorraine, but both sensible of the fact that while material interest binds them to Prussia, the voice of spiritual affinity unites them with the French Republic.

Statistics indeed prove that, even allowing for immigration, the Germans are still in a minority in the two provinces; but this fact in itself is not sufficient to account for the continuing attraction of the French Republic, despite the strong material inducements offered from the other side. The phenomenon indeed is worthy of attention. Here are two provinces which have never enjoyed political independence or the sense of cohesion which such independence confers. For the greater part of their history they have counted as members of the German confederation; for Alsace only became part of France in 1648, and Lorraine was not effectively incorporated in the French monarchy till 1764. And yet, though they have been replaced in their original German connexion, the natives remain French at heart. The explanation is simple. The French Revolution initiated these two provinces into the democratic ideals of the modern world, which the majority of the inhabitants still continue to prefer to the Prussian doctrine of blood and iron and to the methods of the Prussian garrison at Zabern.

The truth is that the quantitative estimate of human values, which plays so large a part in modern political history, is radically false and tends to give a vulgar instead of a liberal and elevated turn to public ambitions. There is no virtue, public or private, which cannot be practised as fully in a small and weak state as under the sceptre of the most formidable tyrant who ever

drove fifty army corps of conscripts to the slaughter. There is no grace of soul, no disinterested endeavour of mind, no pitch of unobtrusive self-sacrifice of which the members of small and pacific communities have not repeatedly shown themselves to be capable. These virtues indeed may be imperilled by lethargy, but they are threatened even more gravely by that absorbing preoccupation with the facts of material power in which the citizens of great empires are inevitably involved.

The great danger of Continental Europe is not revolution but servitude. This war could never have been possible if the intellect of Germany had been really free, if a servile Press supported by a system of State universities had not instilled into the vast mass of the German people ruthless maxims of Caesarism, for the most part repugnant to their real temperament and nature. There are other military autocracies besides Germany, and other countries in which political thought is fettered by the Government. But whatever may be their several shortcomings, the smaller states of Europe are not among the despots. Here at least men may think what they please, and write what they think. Whenever the small states may come up for judgement the advocate of human freedom will plead on their behalf.

# OXFORD PAMPHLETS

## 1914

---

Crown 8vo. Separately, in paper covers. Also in series as numbered (I-VII), stiff covers. One Shilling net each series. 35 Pamphlets have now (25 November) been issued and others are in preparation. The historical pieces are illustrated by sketch-maps.

---

### I

1. **The Deeper Causes of the War.**  
By W. SANDAY. 3d. net. *Fifth Impression.*
2. **To the Christian Scholars of Europe and America:  
A Reply from Oxford to the German 'Address to  
Evangelical Christians'.** 2d. net. *Fourth Impression.*
3. **The Responsibility for the War.**  
By W. G. S. ADAMS. 2d. net. *Second Impression.*
4. **Great Britain and Germany.**  
By SPENSER WILKINSON. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*
5. **'Just for a Scrap of Paper.'**  
By ARTHUR HASSALL. 1d. net. *Fourth Impression.*

### II

6. **The Germans, their Empire, and how they  
have made it.**  
By C. R. L. FLETCHER. 2d. net. *Fourth Impression.*
7. **The Germans, their Empire, and what they covet.**  
By C. R. L. FLETCHER. 2d. net. *Fourth Impression.*
8. **Might is Right.**  
By SIR WALTER RALEIGH. 2d. net. *Second Impression.*
9. **Austrian Policy since 1867.**  
By MURRAY BEAVEN. 3d. net. *Second Impression.*
10. **Italian Policy since 1870.**  
By KEITH FEILING. 2d. net. *Second Impression.*

### III

11. French Policy since 1871.

By F. MORGAN and H. W. C. DAVIS. 2d. net. *Fourth Impression.*

12. Russia: The Psychology of a Nation.

By PAUL VINOGRADOFF. 1d. net. *Fourth Impression.*

13. Serbia and the Serbs.

By Sir VALENTINE CHIROL. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*

14. Germany and 'The Fear of Russia'.

By Sir VALENTINE CHIROL. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*

15. The Eastern Question.

By F. F. URQUHART. 3d. net. *Third Impression.*

### IV

16. War against War.

By A. D. LINDSAY. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*

17. The Value of Small States.

By H. A. L. FISHER. 2d. net. *Third Impression.*

18. How can War ever be Right?

By GILBERT MURRAY. 2d. net. *Fourth Impression.*

19. The National Principle and the War.

By RAMSAY MUIR. 3d. net. *Second Impression.*

20. Nietzsche and Treitschke: The Worship of Power in Modern Germany.

By E. BARKER. 2d. net. *Fourth Impression.*

### V

21. The British Dominions and the War.

By H. E. EGERTON. 2d. net. *Second Impression.*

22. India and the War.

By Sir ERNEST TREVELYAN. 1d. net. *Third Impression.*

23. Is the British Empire the Result of Wholesale Robbery?

By H. E. EGERTON. 2d. net.

24. The Law of Nations and the War.

By A. PEARCE HIGGINS. 2d. net. *Second Impression.*

25. England's Mission.

By W. BENETT. 2d. net.



## VI

### 26. August, 1914: The Coming of the War.

By SPENSER WILKINSON. Stiff covers. 1s. net.

## VII

### *Conduct of the War.*

#### 27. The Retreat from Mons.

By H. W. C. DAVIS. 3d. net. *Third Impression.*

#### 28. The Battles of the Marne and Aisne.

By H. W. C. DAVIS. 4d. net.

#### 29. The Navy and the War.

By J. R. THURSFIELD. 3d. net. *Second Impression.*

#### 30. Bacilli and Bullets.

By Sir WILLIAM OSLER. 1d. net. *Fourth Impression.*

---

*Published separately and will also appear shortly  
in series.*

#### The Double Alliance *versus* The Triple Entente.

By JAMES M. BECK. 3d. net.

#### Thoughts on the War.

By GILBERT MURRAY. 2d. net.

#### The Leading Ideas of British Policy.

By GERARD COLLIER. 2d. net.

#### Greek Policy since 1882.

By A. J. TOYNBEE. 4d. net.

#### Poland, Prussia, and Culture.

By LUDWIK EHRLICH. 3d. net.

#### The Germans in Africa.

By EVANS LEWIN. 3d. net.

#### What Europe owes to Belgium.

By H. W. C. DAVIS. *In the press.*

---

*Spectator*:—‘These little books are easily the best books of the war—accurate, quietly written, full of knowledge, and quite unspoiled by vainglory or bitterness.’

*Others in preparation.*

---

HUMPHREY MILFORD

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, AMEN CORNER, LONDON, E.C.

No. 19

OXFORD PAMPHLETS  
1914

---

THE NATIONAL  
PRINCIPLE  
AND THE WAR

---

BY

RAMSAY MUIR

---

THIRD IMPRESSION

*Price Threepence net*

---

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

HUMPHREY MILFORD

LONDON EDINBURGH GLASGOW

NEW YORK TORONTO MELBOURNE BOMBAY



The solid black lines show the present political frontiers; the broken lines, the racial frontiers.

# THE NATIONAL PRINCIPLE AND THE WAR

## I

THE issues raised by a great war are always wider and deeper than the immediate causes which bring it about ; because war, by sweeping away the timidities of diplomacy and its unwillingness to endanger the existing state of things, seems to bring within reach of realization hopes or theories which in time of peace appear remote and unpractical.

One of the great issues which this war is likely to bring within the realm of practical politics is the fuller realization of what may be called the national principle—the idea, that is, that states ought, so far as possible, to be organized upon a national basis. Those who believe in this principle believe that wherever there exist divided nations which long for unity, or subject nations which aspire to be freed from alien control, it is not only just, and not only desirable in the interests of these nations themselves, but it is also in the long run to the advantage of civilization and humanity at large that these aspirations should be satisfied.

Perhaps it may appear to many people that the nationalist dreams of the Poles, or the Serbians, or the Rumanians, or the Greeks, or the Italians, however warmly we may sympathize with them in theory, are after all no direct concern of the Englishman, but concern only the Poles, Serbians, Rumanians, Greeks, and Italians themselves. But that is a narrow view, for two reasons.

In the first place the civilization of Europe has in a large degree derived its progressive character from the fact that, while there is a basis of unity common to all the peoples of the west, there has always been a great variety within this unity, caused by the different temperaments, traditions, and modes of life of the various peoples who compose Europe. Each people has its own excellences, and its own contributions to make to the common stock ; and the freer all the peoples are left to develop their own civilization in their own way, in rivalry with one another, the better it must be for the world. Each people naturally tends to think its own ways of life and thought the best ; and whenever one people gets power over another it inevitably tries to force its own character and ideas upon the subject people. In so far as it succeeds, it impoverishes the common life of civilization by suppressing one of the elements of variety. Of course it is true that there are some peoples even in Europe which have been kept in a backward condition by the accidents of history ; and it may perhaps be argued that a backward people will profit from being brought under the tutelage of a more advanced people. That is sometimes true ; but it is very dangerous to assume too readily that it is true, especially in the case of European peoples, whose natural abilities, though different, are singularly equal if they have anything like equal opportunities. The Russians, for example, have long been in many ways backward as compared with the French or the Germans. But if they had been forced into a French or a German mould, it is doubtful if Europe would have been enriched by the peculiarly Russian vein of genius shown by a Tolstoy or a Turgenev, or if Northern Asia would have achieved the degree of civilization which Russia has

brought to it. Again, no doubt the Romans were politically superior to the other peoples of the ancient world; but one of the reasons for the gradual decay of civilization in the period of the Roman Empire was just that the Romans had succeeded (in spite of their tolerance) in impressing too high a degree of uniformity upon the world, and in fusing too completely the life-giving variety and contrast of different peoples. In the same way, even though it were true that the 'culture' of the Germans is, as they proclaim, higher than that of any other nation, still if they succeeded in imposing that culture upon the whole civilized world, the result would be stagnation and decay. The greatest security for the progress and vitality of civilization is that there should be the greatest possible variety among civilized states; and this can be best secured by giving to every nation which can establish its title to the name a free chance of developing its own modes of life and its own ideas in its own way. That is the first reason for believing that the extension of the principle of nationality is an issue of great importance for the whole world, and not only for the nations which have yet to establish their unity and freedom.

But there is another, and much more important or practical, reason for believing that the national aspirations of Italians or Serbs directly affect the interests of Englishmen: and that is, that the satisfaction of national aspirations is essential as a safeguard against war. Glance over the history of the nineteenth century, and you will see that almost every revolutionary outbreak, and almost every war or alarm of war which has disturbed Europe, has been due directly or indirectly to unsatisfied aspirations for national unity or freedom. The revolutionary movements of 1820,



1830, and 1848, the Greek war of the twenties, the Italian *Risorgimento*, the three wars which were engineered by Bismarck—all these were the direct outcome of movements for national unity or freedom. Even the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 was deliberately arranged by Bismarck as a means of securing the unity of Germany. Even the Crimean war, though it seemed to turn on other issues, really arose out of the position of the suppressed nationalities of the Turkish Empire, and the same is true of all the Russo-Turkish wars of the nineteenth century. If Western Europe has enjoyed peace since 1871, it is because the nationalist cause had everywhere triumphed in Western Europe by that date, and because with small exceptions there was no survival of the rankling bitterness of unsatisfied national aspirations. And since 1871 the one danger-spot, whose complications have from time to time threatened to plunge Europe into war, has been that region where national aspirations were unsatisfied, or incompletely satisfied—the south-east. It is no mere coincidence that the disastrous war of to-day has arisen directly out of the aspiration of the Serbians for union with their brother Serbs within the Austrian Empire. In view of these facts it is certainly not too much to say that, if the national principle could be carried out in those parts of Europe where it has as yet been incompletely established, the danger of future European wars would be, if not completely removed—that may be too much to hope—at any rate enormously diminished. For that reason the nationalist aspirations of Serbs, Poles, and Rumanians have a very real and practical importance for every Englishman.

## II

But although it is true that the extension of the national principle enriches civilization and is a safeguard against war, these benefits can only be realized if the peoples who claim nationhood are in a real sense nations. A nation is more than the inhabitants of a given area of land across which a particular name is printed on the map. It is a body of people so strongly bound together by natural ties of affinity that they readily sympathize with and understand one another, and can live happily together. The bonds which create this affinity vary in character from one case to another, so that it is impossible to give an exact definition of them. But a nation at its highest is united by some community of race, by a common language and the distinctive ideas which that language expresses, by the common possession of fundamental religious and moral ideas, and by a common tradition, or memory of achievements and sufferings shared in the past. It is easy to name real nations which lack one or other of these features. But no people which lacks them all, or most of them, can be called a nation; nor can the claim to national unity be regarded as a sound one unless, in all the divided sections of the nation, there is a real sense of affinity, and a real desire for unity. Where these things are lacking, the unification, if it is established on merely theoretic grounds, is likely to do more harm than good; to create, rather than to heal, dissatisfaction.

It is important to keep these considerations in mind when we deal with claims that are put forward on grounds of nationality. For example, the Germans

(a nation very prone to be captivated by theories) asserted in 1871 their right to the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine on the grounds that these provinces had been part of Germany up to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries respectively, and that their inhabitants were of German race. But the vital fact was that the Lorrainers and (still more) the Alsatians had become thoroughly French in sentiment; it was with France, not with Germany, that they were bound by conscious ties of affinity. Accordingly they have always resented their severance from France, and the annexation of these provinces has been a standing source of unrest for forty-four years, has prevented the establishment of any permanently friendly relations between France and Germany, and has contributed to the causes which have produced the war.

There is a powerful and noisy party in Germany called the Pan-Germans, who, basing their policy upon the theory of nationality, claim that German unity is incomplete so long as Holland, Belgium, and German Switzerland remain outside the limits of the empire. They claim Holland and Switzerland because their peoples are of Teutonic blood, and because they were in the Middle Ages part of the kingdom of Germany. They try to put forward similar arguments in the case of Belgium. Of course the real reason for these claims is the desire to control, for trade and military purposes, the harbours of the North Sea coast and the Alpine passes, and to get possession of the rich Dutch and Belgian colonies. But these claims are absolutely inconsistent with the national principle, when honestly interpreted. By all the tests of nationality the Dutch are a nation, proudly conscious of their nationhood, and of their glorious history: though originally of German

blood, their history has turned them into a distinct people, and their language has developed along different lines. This is still more clear in the case of Belgium. Holland certainly has no sense of affinity with Germany, and would desperately resist any attempt to incorporate her in that country. Belgium has heroically shown that she is prepared to undergo the uttermost suffering rather than submit to such a fate. The claims of the Pan-Germans are really an insult to the principle of nationality, which they use as a pretext to cover schemes of naked aggression.

Again, we must remember that there are some regions where nationalities are so intermixed that the national principle gives no clear guidance as to the proper lines of division between states. Such regions are to be found in several parts of South-eastern Europe, notably in Macedonia, and their existence constitutes the chief difficulty in the settlement of that region. But the existence of such regions ought not to stand in the way of the establishment of full nationhood in cases where all the marks of nationhood are present; nor should the fact that the national principle is sometimes used as a cloak for projects of greedy aggression weaken our belief that nationality is the strongest and most natural basis for the organization of states.

The organization of states on the basis of nationhood has spread gradually over Europe, from the west eastwards. It began in England and France in the Middle Ages. Spain and Holland and the Scandinavian countries achieved their nationhood in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In Central Europe the national unity of Germany and Italy was only worked out, with labour and travail, in the nineteenth century; and the same period saw the beginning of the rise of

the little long-suppressed nations of the south-east, a process still uncompleted. But there still remains a large area of Europe which is as yet (if we may coin a word) 'unnationalized', or very incompletely nationalized. This area is represented in our map. It includes part of the Russian Empire, a small piece of Germany, practically the whole of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Balkan peninsula. The map has been drawn so as to show how, in this region, political boundaries disregard the lines of division between nationalities. But it is worth while to analyse this region more closely.

### III

The first large region occupied by a distinct nationality is the country of the Poles, which lies mainly in Russia, but includes also part of Eastern Germany, and much of the province of Galicia in the Austrian Empire. The kingdom of Poland was once one of the greatest states of Europe. In the fifteenth century it seemed to overshadow Germany, and was vastly more important than Russia; in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it played a very gallant part in resisting the Turks. But the kingdom fell into decay, owing to a faulty social and political system, and in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, by one of the most cynical crimes of history, its whole territory was unscrupulously divided out, in three partitions, by its three neighbours, Russia, Prussia, and Austria. The prime mover in the first partition was Frederick the Great of Prussia, but Russia got the lion's share of the plunder, including a good deal of really Russian territory which had earlier been acquired by the Poles. From the time of these iniquitous partitions the Poles,

among whom patriotism is a passion, never ceased to pray, to conspire, and on favourable occasions to rebel, in the hope of regaining the unity of their realm. Their national tragedy has turned the Poles into a nation of conspirators and anarchists, and they have had a hand in every revolutionary disturbance of the nineteenth century, in other countries as well as their own. Napoleon tried to make use of Polish patriotism, taking most of the Prussian and Austrian sections of the old kingdom to form a Grand Duchy of Warsaw, and for a few years Poland lived again. But when Napoleon fell, free Poland fell with him. The Grand Duchy was taken over by Russia, whose Tsar promised that it should remain a distinct state, with a constitution of its own; but the promise was kept only for fifteen years. Galicia was kept by Austria, and the Poles of Posen and West Prussia fell once again under the rule of Prussia. On the whole, of recent years, the Poles of Galicia have been better treated than the other sections of the divided nation: they have been allowed a substantial amount of Home Rule, as a means of securing their support for the Austrian Government against the other restless national elements in the Austrian Empire, and on the whole they have been reasonably contented, though they have never forgotten the days of their ancient unity and greatness. But the Poles of Russia have been, spasmodically, very bitterly persecuted, and a vain attempt has been made to turn them into Russians. And the Poles of Prussia, especially during the last thirty years, have had to endure a more scientific and systematic, but not less intolerable, oppression, the German Government having entered upon a regular programme of Germanizing these regions by banning the Polish



language, and buying up Polish land for German settlers from the west. This policy has been a complete failure. It has only intensified the passionate yearning of the Poles for the unity and freedom of their ancient realm—a yearning which seemed hopeless until the outbreak of this war. The deliberate brutality of the German policy in Prussian Poland has been defended, for example by Prince Bülow, on the ground that the history of the Poles shows that they are incapable of ruling themselves. It is an ironic commentary on this view that only a hundred years ago exactly the same thing used to be said about the Germans.

Now a new prospect of hope has opened for the Polish nation, by the issue of the Tsar's proclamation promising that if the Allies are victorious in this war Poland shall be reunited, granted a measure of Home Rule, and linked with its sister Russian nation under the Russian Imperial crown. No doubt that proclamation is prompted by Russian interest, and the promise may not seem altogether reliable in face of the fate of the previous promise of 1814, just a hundred years ago. But certainly unity under the Russian crown is the only practicable unity for Poland under existing conditions. If the Germans and Austrians were successful in the war, all hope of Polish unity would be killed: the Poles know what to expect from the Germans. And the situation has been greatly changed in Russia during the last few years, since the institution of the Duma, in which Polish representatives have sat side by side with Russians, and since the rise of a school of Russian politicians who look forward to the transformation of the Russian Empire into a federation of autonomous states on national lines. The Poles themselves have accepted the promise in all

good faith, despite their unhappy experiences in the past ; and such extreme Radicals as Prince Kropotkin, and such moderate Russian Liberals as Professor Vinogradoff, unite in believing that a new era is about to dawn in Russia, and that in this era the satisfaction of the long disappointed Polish dream of unity and freedom will be inevitable. Thus there seems ground for hoping that at the end of this war the most cruelly suppressed nationality of Europe will obtain not indeed complete independence, but unity and a real measure of freedom. If that happens, one of the most dangerous centres of revolutionary agitation will have been calmed down, and all Europe will gain.

#### IV

South of the divided realm of Poland lies the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It is the only great state of Europe which has no national basis, and that is why its condition has long been held to be precarious. This Empire is a bundle of nations, and fragments of nations, originally brought together by the lucky marriages and conquests of members of the Habsburg family, and in more recent days held together mainly by fear of what would happen if they broke asunder. The Empire is divided into two distinct halves, with distinct governments, and each of these halves is dominated by a ruling race, the Germans of Austria proper in the Austrian half, and the Magyars or Hungarians in the Hungarian half. Austrians and Hungarians have fought bitterly in the past, and do not love one another even now. But since the Hungarians were given Home Rule, in 1867, the two ruling races have managed to work together, and the reason for this is that they are both largely outnumbered by subject races, who

dislike them both, and desire either independence, or union with their free brethren on the other side of the imperial boundary. Both the German-Austrians and the Hungarians occupy clearly-defined areas—the Austrians in the territory immediately south and south-east of their brothers in Germany proper, the Hungarians in the central part of the Danube and Theiss valleys ; but all the outlying parts of the Empire are mainly occupied by other races, quite distinct from both the Austrians and the Hungarians, and in most cases closely related to other free races over the border, as in the case of the Poles, already discussed.

First among these subject races may be named the Bohemians or Czechs, who occupy a large area in the north, a sort of island among the German-speaking peoples, walled in by mountains. The Bohemians look back to a proud national history, the greatest days of which were in the fifteenth century, when the enthusiasm raised by the doctrines of John Hus, and the military genius of a group of great Bohemian soldiers, enabled them triumphantly to defy the might of Germany, and indeed of Europe. The kingdom of Bohemia passed by marriage to the German Dukes of Austria, but the Bohemians proudly maintained their separate national existence, until it was for the time crushed out by a fierce Austrian persecution in the seventeenth century. During the nineteenth century there has been a great revival of national feeling among the Bohemians. They have eagerly studied their own history ; they have made their ancient language, long confined to the peasantry, once more respectable by making it the vehicle of a literature of some value. They unsuccessfully revolted against the Austrian rule in 1848 ; but the failure of that year has not stopped the national movement, and the

government of Bohemia has been a constant difficulty to the Austrians during the last two generations. Unquestionably the Bohemians would like to regain some sort of national independence. They might naturally become a small independent state with guaranteed neutrality: for, if the Allies win in this war, it is not unlikely that powerful monarchies will in future hesitate to disregard such guarantees, and little states will be much safer than they have been in the past.

The whole of the south-eastern part of Hungary, a hilly region known as Transylvania and lying between the Carpathian Mountains and the Danube, is mainly inhabited by Rumanians, of the same race and language as the people of the independent kingdom of Rumania, on the other side of the Carpathians. The Rumanians are a very interesting people. They claim to be descended from Latin soldiers and colonists settled in this region in the second century of the Christian era; and although they must be a very mixed race—for during many centuries they were lost to sight, submerged beneath wave after wave of invading tribes who passed over this region into Europe—yet they have with a singular tenacity preserved a language which is a corruption of ancient Latin, and are thus clearly marked off from all their neighbours. They occupy not only the modern kingdom of Rumania and the Hungarian province of Transylvania, but also the province of Bessarabia, which was rather unfairly taken by Russia in 1878. These regions are fertile and rich in minerals, and the prosperity of the kingdom has shown that the people have real capacity for civilization; and if the kingdom of Rumania could be extended to correspond with the limits of the Rumanian people, it would certainly become a solid and powerful state, with a very

distinctive character of its own. The Rumanians have, of course, long desired this expansion, and their agitation for this development has for many years been one of the vexing questions of Austro-Hungarian politics. That is why they are watching the course of the war with such tense interest.

In the opposite, or south-western, corner of the Austro-Hungarian Empire there is a considerable population of Italians. If you look at the map of Italy you will see a triangular piece of Alpine land jutting into the north Italian plain. This is the 'Tridentine', or district of Trent. It is purely Italian in character, though politically it is part of the Austrian Tyrol. Again, the peninsula of Trieste, which projects into the northern waters of the Adriatic, has a population which is mainly Italian, and, practically until the nineteenth century, it has always been historically as well as geographically a part of Italy. The same is the case with many of the islands and part of the Dalmatian coast of the Adriatic. These lands were part of the old free republic of Venice, which was suppressed by Napoleon, and after his fall was seized by Austria. The Italian inhabitants of these historic Italian lands naturally long to be united with their Italian brothers, and they have given a great deal of trouble to the Austrian Government, which has not treated them well. These lands form what is called *Italia irredenta*, or unredeemed Italy; and the acquisition of them is an object of longing to all good Italians, who hope thus to complete the great work of nation-building on which their fathers spent so much blood.

Lastly, the southern and south-western provinces of the Austrian Empire—Slavonia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, and part of Dalmatia—are mainly inhabited by Serbians, of the same race, language, and traditions as their brothers

in the little free kingdom of Serbia. Indeed these regions were all part of the historic Serbia of the great days before the coming of the Turks, when Serbia seemed likely to become one of the great nations of Europe. The longing of all good Serbians to see these great old days revived has led to an agitation for a Greater Serbia which could only be satisfied at the expense of the Austrian Empire, and which has formed the immediate cause of the present war. But of that we shall presently have more to say.

## V

The Austrian Empire thus consists of two small nations—the Hungarians and the Bohemians, and of divided fragments of five other nations, the Germans, the Poles, the Rumanians, the Italians, and the Serbs, the bulk of which in each case lie outside the limits of the Empire. There are also other races, or fragments of races: Ruthenians (in South Galicia), who are closely related to the Russians; Slovaks in the north, cousins of their Bohemian neighbours; Slovenes or Croats in the south-west, who are near relatives of their Serbian neighbours. Among all these races there is a constant state of friction and misunderstanding, due to their forced union, and for a long time the supreme problem of Austrian statesmanship has been the problem of driving this motley and discordant team in single harness. The task is, indeed, impossibly difficult, and cannot be ultimately successful. There is no great state to which the triumph of the national principle would be so ruinous as to the Austrian Empire, for all the other great states of Europe are organized upon a national basis, and derive their strength from that fact.

Just because the national principle is so dangerous



✓ to Austria, she has always been its most resolute foe ; and the history of Austrian policy in the nineteenth century may almost be summed up in the formula, 'resistance to the national principle wherever it shows itself.' This is strikingly illustrated if we recall the great struggles for national unity which have been the chief features of European history during the last hundred years. When the Greeks rose against the Turks in the '20's, their most steadfast enemy, next to the Turks themselves, was the Austrian Government : the Powers whose intervention made the establishment of Greek independence possible were the Allies of to-day, Russia, France, and England. When the Belgians, in the '30's, revolted against the supremacy of Holland, Austria and Prussia would have been ready to reduce them by force ; the Powers whose intervention saved the freedom of Belgium were Belgium's allies of to-day, France and England. The heroic story of the freeing and unification of Italy is essentially the story of a fight against Austria ; and so far as Italy did not owe her freedom to the valour of her own sons, she owed it to the armed intervention of France and the steady sympathy and diplomatic support of England. Most remarkable of all, Austria formed the supreme obstacle to the unification of Germany, and it was not until Austria had been crushed by Prussia, in 1866, that the establishment of a united Germany under Prussian control became possible.

## VI

But the most remarkable illustration of the anti-national policy which is forced upon Austria by the condition of her own empire is to be found in her attitude towards the nationalities of the Balkan peninsula, which have been for so many centuries suppressed, and in a large degree barbarized, by the stupid and oppressive dominion of the Turks.

There are five distinct nationalities in this region, not including the Turks, who have never been more than a thinly sprinkled caste of warrior-rulers. We have already said something about the Rumanians, whose independent kingdom as yet occupies less than half of the area peopled by the Rumanian race. The Greeks are the second race, and their history has attracted far more attention in Western Europe than that of the other races. The Greeks have nearly attained their natural limits, though there are still some essentially Greek islands which ought to be added to the kingdom of Greece ; one of these is Cyprus, which is at present under English administration. Once the disorder which has for generations been chronic in South-eastern Europe has been brought to an end, there is every hope that we shall see a vigorous revival of Greek civilization, to the enrichment of the world.

The third of the Balkan nations is the Bulgarians, an honest and solid race of peasants, who in the thirteenth century set up a very formidable power, but whose very existence was forgotten by Europe during the long centuries of subjection to the Turkish yoke. Most people had never heard of them when, in the '70's, the stories of the Bulgarian atrocities aroused the horror of Europe and formed the theme of Gladstone's

Midlothian speeches. Bulgaria was almost the last of the Balkan nations to achieve the beginnings of freedom ; her existence as a free nation only began after the Russo-Turkish war, in 1878. How great is the effect of freedom upon the spirit of a nation is shown by the subsequent development of this little state. The chroniclers of the war of 1878 repeatedly emphasize the servile and spiritless character of the Bulgarian peasantry ; that was the result of five hundred years of alien rule. But after only a single generation the sons of these servile and spiritless peasants showed on the field of Lule Burgas and elsewhere that, fighting in a national cause, they yielded in valour to no soldiery of the world. Bulgaria has now almost reached its natural national limits ; almost, but not quite, for the circumstances of the settlement after the Balkan wars (circumstances indirectly due in a large measure to Austria) robbed her of some regions which ought to belong to her.

The fourth of the Balkan peoples is the most ancient of all, the Albanians, who have dwelt since the dawn of history among the inaccessible rocks in the middle-western part of the peninsula. Never really subjugated or assimilated by any conqueror, they have never escaped from a crude state of unending tribal warfare. Yet they have produced not only fine soldiers, but many able administrators, without whose aid the Turkish power would scarcely have lasted so long as it has. Whether or no the Albanians, if left to themselves, could evolve a stable and orderly system, is hard to say. But it is clear that the Albanian problem is not to be solved by the loan of a German ruler to these wild and proud people.

The last, and in many ways the most interesting, of the Balkan peoples is the Serbian nation. It is spread

over not only Serbia proper, but also the kingdom of Montenegro and (as has been already noted) the Austrian provinces of Bosnia, Herzegovina, Dalmatia, and Slavonia, while the province of Croatia is occupied by a closely kindred people. If the Serbian kingdom were enlarged to its natural limits it would thus reach the Adriatic Sea, and form a realm of substantial size, approximately equal to the enlarged Rumania. In the fourteenth century, when we were fighting the French at Cressy and Poitiers, the Serbian Empire included almost the whole of this area, and more; indeed, under the greatest of their kings, Stephen Dushan, who died in 1355, the Serbians bade fair to extend their power over the whole of the Balkan peninsula. But, before their power was consolidated, they had to meet the brunt of the Turkish invasion; and after a hard struggle the freedom of Serbia was broken for four hundred years in the disastrous battle of Kossova, and Europe forgot the existence of this suppressed nationality. But the memory of ancient greatness and of its sudden and tragic downfall is very real to every Serbian peasant. Stephen Dushan is still a national hero; and when in the Balkan war a Serbian army defeated the hated Turks at Kumanovo, almost on the site of the fatal battle of Kossova, the effect upon patriotic emotion was electric. The Serbs were the first of the Balkan peoples to revolt against Turkish rule; indeed, one branch of them, the inhabitants of the little mountain nook of Montenegro, were never really conquered by the Turks at all. The first rising began in Serbia proper in 1804, long before the Greek rebellion; and although the Serbs got little help from Europe, in a long-drawn-out struggle under their gallant leader the swineherd Kara George, they held their own, and

in the end compelled the grant to them of self-government under Turkish suzerainty, in 1826. From that date onwards their dream has been the union of the whole Serbian people, and the revival of some shadow of their ancient greatness. They achieved full independence with the help of Russia in 1878. But both before and since that date it has been made plain to them that their inevitable foe, and the great obstacle to their dream of Serbian unity, was to be found in Austria. Hence the agitations which led to the unhappy murder of last June, and thence to the great war. But to understand this, and its bearing upon the national principle in this region, it is necessary to consider the policy of Austria in regard to the little Balkan nations.

## VII

The Turks, who had crushed the rising nations of Serbs, Bulgarians, and Rumanians, afterwards overthrew the Hungarians also, and pressed on to the very gates of Vienna, which they twice besieged, in the sixteenth, and again in the seventeenth century. Accordingly the business of driving back the Turkish power fell in the first instance to the Austrians. In a series of remarkable campaigns at the end of the seventeenth century they drove back the Turks beyond the Danube, and won from them the territory occupied by the Hungarians, by the Rumanians of Transylvania, and by the Serbs of Slavonia. For a short time they even crossed the Danube and occupied a part of Serbia proper (1718-39). But it did not occur to the Austrian conquerors to give independence or self-government to these peoples whom they had released from Turkish rule. They merely added them to their own empire. From this time the Austrian Government made it

a principal object of policy to expand south-eastwards at the expense of the Turk, in the hope of ultimately reaching Salonika and the Aegean Sea. That ambition the Austrians have steadily pursued ever since, though with singularly little success. And as the rise of free states in the Balkans would be inconsistent with this ambition, as well as a source of disturbance to the composite Austrian Empire itself, Austria has never welcomed the creation of these states.

The reason for the non-success of Austria's policy of expansion at the expense of the Turk was that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries she found a serious rival in this field in Russia, who possessed this great advantage, that she was of the same race and religion as most of the Balkan peoples, and could therefore appeal for their loyalty in a way that Austria could not, and did not desire to, imitate. There has always been this marked distinction between the policy of the two rival empires in the Balkans, that while Austria has consistently opposed the rise of free states, Russia has as steadily encouraged and supported this idea. Since the time of her first serious intervention in Balkan affairs, in 1772-4, she has (unlike Austria) scarcely attempted to annex territory directly; but every victory which she has won over the Turks (and there have been many Russo-Turkish wars between 1772 and 1878) has been marked by an increase in the number of free states or in the degree of self-government allowed to them. It would, of course, be absurd to suggest that this has been due to any exalted magnanimity on Russia's part: she has hoped to increase her influence by appearing as the patron of the little nations; her policy has no doubt been quite as much dictated by self-interest as that of Austria. But this



at least is true, that Russia's view of her own interest has led to the freedom of the suppressed nationalities in this region, and that Austria's view of her own interest has made her the steady foe of all such developments. The success of the Russian policy was largely due to the fact that she was able to make use of the powerful force of national feeling. But her success was regarded, throughout the nineteenth century, with great anxiety, not only by Austria, but by England, which, elsewhere the friend of the national principle, was here turned into its enemy by jealous fear of Russia. Neither England, nor Russia herself, realized until a very late date that, once these states were really free and began to prosper, they would refuse to be the mere puppets even of the Power to which they owed their liberty.

The last and most important military intervention of Russia in Balkan affairs was the war of 1877-8, which followed on the revolt of the Bosnian Serbs and the Bulgarian atrocities. Having beaten the Turks to their knees, Russia compelled them to grant complete independence to Rumania and Serbia, and to establish the new State of Bulgaria as a practically independent State, within limits nearly corresponding to those which Bulgaria gained in the last Balkan war (Treaty of San Stefano, 1878). But this did not at all suit Austria. The setting up of these states, under Russian influence, put an end to all hope of her realizing her ambition of controlling the territory between the Danube and the Aegean Sea. Backed by Germany, with whom she was about to make that intimate alliance which has lasted ever since, and also by England, still governed by her old fears of Russia, she got the Treaty of San Stefano revised by the Powers; the territory

of Bulgaria was cut down ; and the Serbian regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina were placed under Austrian administration. The Bosnians resisted their new masters, but in vain ; and their defeat seemed to put an end to all hope of Serbian unity, and made Austria appear—what indeed she was—the inevitable foe of the Serbian national cause. Nevertheless there was for a long time a pro-Austrian party in Serbia ; and the fact that the king and court were largely identified with this party, which seemed to most Serbians anti-national and unpatriotic, helps to explain the most discreditable episode in the recent history of Serbia—the murder of the last Serbian king of the Obrenovitch line, and his replacement by a member of the rival and exiled family of Karageorgevitch, the descendants of the hero of the Serbian rising at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The fact that Austria was the inevitable foe of the cause of Serbian national unity has been made clearer than ever during the last twenty years—when Austria and Germany, now closely united, began to work out the old programme of expansion towards the south-east on new and more ambitious lines. This bold scheme, which looked far beyond the Balkan peninsula, and aimed at the establishment of Austro-German influence through Asia Minor and Mesopotamia to the Persian Gulf, and perhaps ultimately to India, has been, together with the equally bold naval and colonial ambitions of Germany in the west, the main cause of the new grouping of European States, and of the present war. Its successful accomplishment depended upon several things. First of all, there was to be a close alliance with Turkey—the ancient and hated oppressor of the Balkan nations. Turkey was practically to become a member of the

Triple Alliance, and to leave the exploitation of her commercial resources in German hands. General Bernhardt has told us that Turkey is the 'natural ally' of Germany, and Prince von Bülow says that Turkey 'serves German interests from the industrial, military, and political points of view', and has been 'a useful and important link in the chain of our political relations'. So the Kaiser began to cultivate friendly relations with Abdul Hamid, and, after his disconcerting fall, with the Young Turks, and German officers took in hand the reconstruction of the Turkish army. But the bolstering up of the Turkish power was a direct challenge to the Balkan nationalities, which could only achieve their unity at the expense of the Turks. Secondly, the great scheme involved that the Balkan States should be kept apart, and as weak as possible. This particularly applied to Serbia, which lay right in the path of Austrian advance towards the Aegean Sea, and intervened between the German powers and their 'natural ally'. So Serbia must be somehow reduced to dependence on Austria; and this was at first attempted by commercial methods, through a tariff war, which was ruinous to Serbian trade, and reduced the Serbians to the highest pitch of exasperation. Lastly, the direct power of Austria in the Balkans was to be increased as far as possible. A splendid opportunity of doing this presented itself in 1908, when Austria, backed by Germany, suddenly announced the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, hitherto administered under the nominal suzerainty of Turkey. The Serbians were, of course, wild with indignation, but they were powerless to resist. Russia, scarcely recovered from the Japanese war, was unready to fight; and Germany announced, in the grandiloquent phrase of the Kaiser,

that she 'stood in shining armour beside her ally', like a knight of romance succouring the weak and the oppressed. From that moment the feeling of the Serbians for Austria became one of inextinguishable hatred, and, both in Serbia itself and in the annexed provinces, secret societies and conspiracies began to spring up, as was indeed inevitable.

It was a grave blow to the Austro-German plans when three of the Balkan States—largely under the influence of the fears which these plans had aroused—forgot their jealousies and formed a league against the Turks. It was a greater blow still when this league proved its superiority in the field, and the German-trained Turkish army was defeated, and the Turk almost driven out of Europe. The threads of the great scheme had to be painfully gathered up again. In the London conferences, when the Powers intervened to regulate the terms of peace, the influence of Austria and Germany could not prevent the weakening of the 'natural ally' and the strengthening of the little conquering nations; but they devoted all their efforts to preventing Serbia from getting a foothold on the Adriatic, because that would have made her commercially independent of Austria. And as Serbia could not win the natural price of her victories in the addition to her realm of territory occupied by Serbs, since most of this territory was in the hands of Austria, she had to be compensated elsewhere, in a region which should naturally have fallen to Bulgaria. This had, from the Austro-German point of view, the happy effect of bringing about a quarrel between the victorious allies, which led to the wretched second Balkan war; and if it had not been for the intervention of Rumania, it is quite likely that the result would have been the

downfall of Serbia and the revival of 'our natural ally'. Thus Austrian and German policy succeeded in ruining an unequalled opportunity for the satisfaction of national aspirations in the Balkans, and for the making of a permanent friendly alliance between the reinvigorated Balkan powers. These things would have been a blessing for the peace of Europe; the Balkans would have ceased to be the running sore in the polity of Europe which they have been for so long. But the peace of Europe, and the satisfaction of national aspirations, were not to the interests of Austria or of Germany.

Is it wonderful that this truncated settlement, which left Serbia, after her heroic efforts, apparently as far as ever from her dream of national unity, should have been followed by a new activity of agitation in the Serbian provinces of Austria? The murder of the Archduke last June was the sort of result that might be expected from a proud and baffled people who have but recently escaped from four centuries of training in lawlessness under the Turkish yoke. Deeds as horrible, done under no greater provocation, are to be found in the history of every nation; and although that is no defence for an indefensible crime, it is at any rate an explanation. Although no proof has yet been afforded that the Serbian Government had any previous knowledge of the deed, or that the Serbian people sympathized with it, the murder obviously presented a splendid excuse to Austria and Germany for dealing once and for all with Serbia, which had proved so inconvenient an obstacle to the great scheme, and for reducing her to complete dependence. The opportunity came at a moment when the German military machine was in a state of perfect readiness, with everything prepared

for war, the Kiel Canal just deepened, the secret of the great Krupp guns not yet out, the Zeppelins equipped in their sheds, the quarries and cement-beds all prepared in France, the coal-ships ready to set out from distant ports to supply commerce-raiders, and all the army of spies at their posts. A moment so admirable might never recur ; and so the war began.

### VIII

It had arisen immediately out of a great stroke against the natural aspirations of a little and divided nation in the south-east ; it was driven home promptly by a villainous and cowardly blow against another small nation in the north-west, whose sole offence was that it trusted to the plighted honour of a nation that had once itself known the miseries of weakness and disunion ; and it had for its immediate aim the permanent ruin of a great nation which has through centuries been in the van of civilization in Europe, and which, if it was once led astray by the dream of dominion over other peoples, has long since learnt to be satisfied with its own freedom and prosperity. If ever the cause of nationality were at stake in any war, it is at stake in this war. And if the ultimate victory falls where it must fall if honour and freedom are to survive in the world, then one outcome of the victory must be the final triumph of the national principle, the final adjustment of the political geography of Europe on the sound and just basis of nationality. Belgium, the martyr, must be recompensed and assured for ever of the sanctity of her territory. The brutal injustices which Prussia has inflicted upon other nations in the pursuit of German unity and greatness must be redeemed, and the Alsatian allowed to regain citizen-



ship in his beloved France if he wishes it; the Dane of Schleswig must be no more severed from his brother to the north; the Poles of Posen and of Cracow must be reunited, after so long a severance, in the fatherland which they once shared with the Pole of Warsaw. The little nations of the south-east must at last be allowed to achieve national unity, and to work out their destinies and develop their distinctive civilization in peace. Greater Serbia and greater Rumania must make their appearance as solidly organized states on the map of Europe. Bulgaria must regain the Bulgarian lands of which she has been stripped, largely because of the selfish ambitions of greater states. The last of the Isles of Greece under foreign rule must be added to the Hellenic realm. Unredeemed Italy must be rejoined to her mother-state. The Bohemians must regain their long-lost freedom, either in full independence or in a federal autonomy. The proud Magyar must be content with a Hungary which is truly Hungarian, and cease to lord it over peoples of another race. And finally, the Germans themselves, though they have been in these latter years the villains of the nationalist drama, must be content with the rich and wide lands which their sons have peopled; but they must not, any more than any other free nationality, be made to suffer the indignity of partition and disunion which they have been ready to force upon others. If they think fit, the Austrian Germans must be allowed to join the great confederacy of their fellow countrymen; or, if that seems better, to join with their fellow Catholics, the Bavarians, with whom they have more sympathy than either feels for the Prussian, in a new confederacy. There are many difficulties in these readjustments. But only if the statesmen who

will have the task of constructing the new Europe keep constantly in mind the principle of nationality will they be able to build permanently and well. Only then shall we have a Europe from which the bitterness of disappointed national aspirations, the fruitful source of discord, will have been banished—a Europe in which each member of the great European family will be free to develop its distinctive character and civilization as it best can, unthreatened by the arrogant claim of any single member of the family to force its own *Kultur*, its own ideas, its own modes of organization, upon the rest, and protected by a universal respect for mutual rights, guaranteed by treaties that none will dare to dishonour.

# WHY WE ARE AT WAR

## GREAT BRITAIN'S CASE

BY MEMBERS OF THE OXFORD FACULTY  
OF MODERN HISTORY

E. BARKER.

H. W. C. DAVIS.

C. R. L. FLETCHER.

ARTHUR HASSALL.

L. G. WICKHAM LEGG.

F. MORGAN.

---

With an Appendix of Original Documents  
including the Authorized English Translation  
of the White Book issued by the  
German Government

---

THIRD EDITION REVISED (NINTH IMPRESSION)  
CONTAINING THE RUSSIAN ORANGE BOOK AND  
EXTRACTS FROM THE BELGIAN GREY BOOK

---

TRANSLATIONS INTO FRENCH ITALIAN SPANISH  
GERMAN AND SWEDISH ARE  
NOW READY

---

*Paper Covers Two Shillings net (70 cents)*  
*Cloth Two Shillings and Sixpence net (85 cents)*

OXFORD: AT THE CLARENDON PRESS  
LONDON: HUMPHREY MILFORD

EDINBURGH GLASGOW NEW YORK TORONTO  
MELBOURNE BOMBAY









